

The Logic of Success

Success Happens for a Reason

Victor Gonzalez

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Born and raised in Chicago's inner city, Victor Gonzalez has achieved a level of success few expected: By 35 he was Vice President in \$3B Fortune 500 company, and went on to become President of Global Sales & Marketing to help build a \$420M company.

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For more info go to: www.thelogicofsuccess.com

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INTRODUCTION

Veni, Vidi, Vici (I came, I saw, I conquered)
– Julius Caesar

The motivational and self-help industry has been around for more than 50 years and reaps an estimated \$24 billion a year in revenue. With much of this market geared toward the corporate world, why is it that businesses continue to fail at an alarming rate of 95% over a three-year period? A recent survey showed that an estimated 53% of the workforce is unhappy and over 75% would rather be doing something else.

With all this money being invested in the self-help industry (which has had plenty of time to mature) the questions still remain: Why aren't we happier? Why do businesses or individuals fail at achieving their goals? Do we not understand Success? Are we not comprehending what it means to be successful?

Let's begin with the last question about understanding success; complete these statements, filling in the blank with the word you think is most appropriate:

- Our _____ determines our Altitude.
- If you believe it, you can _____ it.
- Turn obstacles into _____.
- Do what you love, and the _____ will follow.

If you knew the answers to these questions (check correct answers below) and are unhappy, why is success still eluding you? Why do you continue to stay at a job you don't love? How do you break this pattern of failure and discontent?

The purpose of this book is to offer you a framework and/or system for understanding the essentials of success. Success, albeit unseen, has an inherent nature, a tendency if you will, that if properly understood can be utilized to chart a course of achievement. Success requires a logic that first must be understood before it can be applied. Once comprehended, you the reader are left with the task of implementing the logic of success.

Victor Gonzalez, January 13, 2003

(answers: attitude, achieve, opportunities, money)

L.O.G.I.C.

“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

LISTEN TO YOURSELF

I was born and raised in Chicago; my family moved there from Puerto Rico in the late 1950s. My mother came to the United States with a 6th grade education and my father only a 3rd grade education. Suffice it to say, when they arrived on U.S. soil they were untrained and possessed no formal education. I can only imagine how difficult it must've been; like many of your immigrant ancestors, I'm sure.

We didn't have a lot of money and it wasn't easy being poor. Welfare and food stamps were our lifesavers, along with people in the neighborhood who would sneak food to my mother. You see, early on my father drank heavily and spent what little money we had on his habit. We lived near the Cabrini Green housing projects, at the time one of the top-three most dangerous areas in the United States.

To make matters a tad worse, my parents' inability to speak or read the language made it impossible for them to get a driver's license. We depended on public transportation to get around or we simply walked long distances to get where we needed to go. I still remember returning home with my mother from the supermarket pulling a hand-cart full of groceries through one-foot deep snow. By the time I got home, I couldn't feel my hands or feet.

Growing up poor and in a dangerous neighborhood provided little motivation for people, in general, to better themselves.

I'm often asked, “Victor, what motivated you to go to college? What helped you overcome the adversity you faced?”

I can usually see in the questioner's eyes that they're waiting to hear an inspirational story about “the struggle,” about “knowing one's destiny” or about “having a vision” of sorts.

“Nope, can't help them there!” I think to myself.

You see, I went to college for three reasons and none of them have anything to do with following a dream or having a vision of who I would become.

First, I went to college to get a degree. I chose engineering because of the potential for landing a high paying job when I graduated. I needed to make money and I chose a major that would help facilitate my needs. My father, at the time of my entrance to college, was making only \$17,000 a year. There were seven of us and if it weren't for the benevolence of friends and access to public assistance to help supplement his meager income, I don't know how we could've survived.

I'm often struck by people who say they have little when in reality they have quite a lot. For example, I never had the benefit of being able to "go out" to eat, an activity many took for granted. I still remember being in my first restaurant at the age of 21, utterly amazed at the concept of going out to dinner.

The second reason I elected to go to college—which was an equal if not greater motivator than making money—was my father's threat to have me work at his factory if I didn't. My father worked at a frame-plating company where the hours were long and the work nothing to be desired. Every time I wavered about going to college, my mother was there to quickly remind me of the alternative.

The final, more personal, reason for going to college was my mother's wish to see at least one of her children obtain a degree. I am the youngest and I was her last hope. My mother didn't perceive getting the degree as an income-generating source. No, her value system was aimed at seeing her son make it in the world. My mother had no clue how much engineers made and never asked. She simply wanted the pleasure of seeing one of her own earn a college degree.

So, there you have it; money, fear and "doing it for mama" were my three motivators. And all three were the wrong reasons for getting a degree, as I'll explain in a bit.

Despite my difficult childhood, nothing I had experienced up to that point could have prepared me for the challenges I would face in college.

Going to College

Let me share with you a true story about my first day at college. I need to tell you first off that I graduated 3rd in my high school class and felt pretty good about myself as I roamed the campus that first day. Little did I know, however, that I was in store for the biggest awakening of my young life. I soon came to realize how bad a Chicago public education was *at the time*, as I'll now explain.

On my first day of class, I walked into a math course titled "Advanced Mathematics." I remember sitting in a massive auditorium with hundreds of other students for the first time. The

theatre-like room was filled to the brim with fresh college enthusiasm. The professor then entered the arena-like venue, walked onto the platform on cue and began writing what seemed to be a foreign language on the blackboard. Above it was the title “Calculus: Differential Equations.”

As he wrote down formulas, all I could do was stare at the board like a deer caught in some oncoming headlights. Suddenly, a student sitting in front of me snapped me out of my bewildered daze and, along with it, my self-deluded ego about how smart I was.

I can still see this student sitting in front of me wearing a St. Lawrence jacket, indicating he had attended a private catholic school in the suburbs of Chicago. As I stared clueless at the professor’s writing, the student in front of me shattered (if not obliterated) any confidence I had walking into the classroom that day with these words: “Oh, not this again!”

I stared at him, or the back of his head, in disbelief as he shook it with disappointment.

Meanwhile, I went into hyper-panic. “What again? What the hell is this?” I asked myself.

For the next hour, I sat there in stupefied silence, seeing and hearing but understanding little. My next classes didn’t go any better. By mid-week, I had come to the realization that I couldn’t keep up. I then went to see an advisor and we both agreed that I should take the pre-college courses (or remedial classes as I called them), which would put me one half-year behind the freshman class. So, right from the start, adversity had made its presence known. But I was determined to graduate, no matter the setbacks or the cost to my ego.

Let me fast forward my life. It took me five years to graduate with an engineering degree, but I never gave up. The motivation of wanting to make money, the fear of the alternative (i.e., working with my father at his factory) and not wanting to disappoint my mother were the three pistons which drove this intellectual engine.

Let me fast forward even further into my life. Three years after graduation I’m working and making \$35,000 a year, where I’m wearing a nice “white” collar. At that point, I had everything I had ever dreamed of: a good job, a great salary and a position in the business world.

I should’ve been happy. I should’ve been shouting that famous movie line, “Look Ma, I’m on top of the world!” But I wasn’t. Something had been nagging at me for the last three years in the corporate world but I didn’t know what. What I did know was that having achieved my objectives and my primary goal of a degree, I was still unhappy. The only difference between then and now was a little more money in my pocket.

I was unhappy. Even making what I considered great money at the time and having achieved my goals, I had to admit to myself I wasn't content. That realization, and the eventual admission to myself, hit me like a ton of bricks. You see, I had worked eight years (five in college plus three on the job) to get to this position only to find out that it wasn't what I "imagined" it would be. I'm sure all of you, at one time or another, struggled to get somewhere or something only to realize upon acquiring what you desired, it wasn't what you thought it would be.

The images I had in my head did not match the reality I now found myself in. My "year of discontent" was 1990, when I could no longer ignore the reality of my unhappiness.

Let me fast forward one last time. On May 9th, 2001 at 3:48 p.m. (almost 15 years after graduation), I walked out on corporate America. I was making \$250,000 a year plus commissions and by leaving it all behind, I was forfeiting my perquisites and 110K shares of stock options.

I know what you must be thinking. First, how does one go from \$35,000 a year to \$250,000 a year in that time span?

Second, with regard to walking out, you must be wondering, "What the hell was he thinking?" Or more simply, "Why?" Let me address the "how" before I get to the "why."

When I realized that I no longer wanted to be an engineer, I began looking around for other career avenues. I tried out several positions, but the one that fit my background and personality the best was a job in sales.

I would spend my next 11 years in corporate America in the field of sales. Sales allowed me the freedom to not be tied to a desk, to travel around the world, to have more control over my financial destiny but more importantly, it was something I enjoyed doing.

When you do something that comes naturally to you and succeed at it, look out; you'll create the ultimate freedom machine.

Now to answer the "why" I walked out. By 35, I was one of the youngest Vice-Presidents in a \$3 billion corporation. By 37, I was President of Sales & Marketing, helping build a \$420 million company. So, why did I walk out on the job and career? No, I didn't have another job waiting. No, I hadn't amassed a fortune during those eleven years.

The answer to the question is simple and yet complex. I was tired of traveling, tired of big business, and believe it or not, there was still something nagging at me.

We have all used the phrase, "everything's relative" to describe how the importance of something is dependent on the person making the value judgment. Being in sales was a relatively better position than

being an engineer. But relatively better doesn't equal an ideal situation.

Up to the point where I walked out, I had never taken the time to listen to myself. Sure, I had aligned myself into sales because it fit my personality better, but that little nagging voice inside of me kept saying, "This isn't it; keep looking."

I was doing it everyone else's way but my own.

If I wanted to be successful, both financially and emotionally, I had to find what would make *me* happy. As the godfather of motivation Earl Nightengale would probably advise, if money weren't important and you could do anything you wanted, what would you be doing? If you knew you could not fail at whatever you tried, what would it be?

I now found myself at the crossroads of life again. This time the question wasn't whether or not I should go to college. This question was easier: get a job or get a career?

I was no longer satisfied just doing "a job." I had also come to the conclusion, like so many others, that money won't make you happy unless you earn it doing what you love. I know you've heard the "money won't buy you happiness" statement already, but to hear and live it are two entirely different things.

Most people who use the phrase, "Money won't buy you happiness" have never really had a surplus of money. When you're making money and living well and then come to the same realization, you've moved from externalizing to internalizing the real meaning of the statement, "Money REALLY won't buy you happiness."

Now, don't get me wrong, money ranks right up there with oxygen as a necessity in life. I'm not advocating a "return to nature and abandon all material possessions" mentality here; far from it.

What I am advocating is a confirmation that money is a byproduct of happiness, rather than the product that actually gives you happiness. In other words, you should be making money as a result of doing what you love (i.e., what makes you happy). Don't bank on making money and hope it will bring you happiness.

Chasing "the money" is like chasing a flying paper in the wind; it'll keep you busy but it won't make you happy.

Every day, millions of people in this world find ways and reasons within themselves to ignore or placate their unhappiness. I'll repeat that in order to be happy you must be doing what you love, not what you need to do. What's the difference? Magnitude and dedication. When you do what you love, your energy moves you forward with passionate momentum. When obstacles are placed in your way,

your dedication to what you love moves those barriers out of the way.

On the other hand, when you do something because it's your job, your energy level and dedication are diminished greatly. The difference between a person who loves what they do and the person who just does it is manifested when both are faced with adversity. If hardship were to hit, I'd have my money on the person who loves performing their job over the one who simply does it for an income. The former sees their passion as a profession. The latter will more than likely view that job merely as a necessity.

To know what you love is truly a blessing.

I quit my job because it was just that, a job. I had yet to discover what I wanted to do, what I would love to do. I needed to take the time to discover what I would be passionate about and what would give my life purpose. I needed to find a reason for doing something that gave meaning and purpose to me as an individual. It wasn't easy getting to that point.

Like millions of people today, instead of seeking our purpose, our higher ground, we pacify the nagging voice in our head. We tell ourselves, "We'll do it next year. Now is not the time," and so on. We push off what we should be doing in exchange for a good job.

We are all guilty of this type of procrastination to some extent. We put off thinking about what we really want to do, because the pain of not being able to do it or admitting that we lack the courage to do it is too painful. We keep deferring the dream. We *rationalize* (i.e., the ability to "ration lies" to ourselves) away why we can't do it right now. There's always a reason to leave it for next year because now is never a good time.

The term "golden handcuffs" refers to making a lot of money at a job and not being able to walk away from it because the inducements to stay are so great (e.g., high salary, perquisites, commissions, etc.). I became a prisoner of my own success. I didn't realize my victim status of the golden-handcuff mentality until one day when my wife made a statement to me. Her off-the-cuff remark awoke me from my perq-laden stupor. "What's the point of having money, if you can't do what you want to do?" Wham! Ouch!

That statement was the catalyst. Those were the words that stirred my dormant ambitions. From that moment on, I began to re-evaluate my life and my career. Her words went right to work, subconsciously re-igniting my latent desires to jump the corporate rails and pursue my own course of action.

If it really isn't about the money, then what is success?

In the beginning, I had no money, and I wasn't happy. I now had a great paying professional career and yet I was still unhappy. "What the hell is going on? How could this be?" I kept asking myself.

Based on the survey I commented on at the beginning of this chapter, which stated that 53% of the workforce are unhappy and over 75% would rather be doing something else, I knew I wasn't alone.

Like many, early on I thought life was all about money, but I figured wrong. To put it poetically, I lived in the valley of poverty and although nobility may have dwelled there, nobility wouldn't pay the rent. I've been to the mountaintop of financial success and can tell you about the amenities and adorations to be found there, but they won't satisfy the urgings of individual accomplishment. So where, if not in the valley or at the mountaintop, is success to be found?

So where do we begin our search for success?

Torpedoing Success

One of my first internship jobs as a college student was working for a defense company who, at the time, developed a highly sophisticated torpedo for hunting down submarines and destroying them. The operation of the torpedo was pretty fascinating. The torpedo was launched from the deck of a ship or dropped from a helicopter into the water. It would then turn on and initiate a search mode, where it would make circular patterns while constantly "pinging." Pinging is the sound the sonar device makes when it wants to bounce sound waves off objects underwater. These sound waves create echoes of what is located underwater. The torpedo had what was called an underwater signature recognizer, a device that compares the echo outlines of each incoming sound wave with a database of other outlines to determine what the object is.

To get an idea of what I mean, think of an underwater signature as a silhouette of an underwater object. Every time the torpedo sent out a sound wave it would wait for the echo. Each echo (silhouette) was compared to that of an underwater submarine echo. The objective of the torpedo was to try to find objects underwater that matched the silhouette of a submarine.

Once it detected something that "might" be a submarine, the torpedo would then go after the target. As the torpedo got closer to its potential target, it would continue pinging and comparing each echo in order to be sure the object was indeed a submarine. The closer the torpedo got, the better the definition of the echo.

The torpedo would break off its "attack mode" if, as it got closer to the acquired target, it realized the silhouette did not match; if the object was a false alarm, it would steer off course. For example, the

torpedo was able to discern a submarine from let's say a whale, a school of fish or an underwater rock formation. So, as the torpedo got closer and discovered the object wasn't a submarine, it would break off and terminate its attack mode. It would then begin a new search pattern all over again in another area.

"In order to find success, we need to create search patterns."

Take a lesson from the torpedo's behavior. Right now, many of you are in the search mode looking for your target. You're trying to find something—something that will fulfill you. Something that, instead of mourning the passing of another blissful night and filling you with dread for the upcoming events of the day, you'll look forward to every time you wake up in the morning. But many of you are afraid to search for or have simply given up your "pinging."

Why have you stopped searching?

Are you afraid to even consider the possibility of change? Are you frustrated because you don't know what you want? Or have you been conditioned by society not to search for something more and just be content with what you have?

Let's work the answers backwards. You have been conditioned by society but may be unaware of it. In society, when you search and change your mind about doing something, what do people say? "You can't make up your mind. You're too wishy-washy. You need to be more focused. You need to prioritize," and so on.

So what do we do? Since we aren't sure, we give up or accept whatever comes our way and then "rationalize" our decision to stop searching. Why? Because, the last thing we want to do is change our minds again and be criticized by others.

Do you see the trap? If you stop searching, or exploring, how can you find what you're looking for? How can you *know* what you want to do if you've never gone out and done it?

The simple answer lies in the analogy of the torpedo. Your nature is much like that of the torpedo; you should be constantly searching for your target. It is your inherent nature as a thinking being to explore. Like the torpedo, you to have the option to break off your search mode and begin searching again until you find what you're looking for.

Try it and if you don't like it, it's O.K. to change your mind!

Forget what others may think or say. Who cares! Only through experimentation can you find what your calling in life is. Only by risking being wrong can you ever hope to be right.

Changing your mind should not be labeled a failure; it should be labeled as learning. And when you stop learning about yourself, about your likes and your dislikes, you simply stop living. You begin “existing” without attempting to give your life any meaning.

Success is not a destination, as most have said. Rather, it is a journey. And giving up on your search is equivalent to stopping in the middle of life’s road and saying, “That’s it; I’m done looking.” If that is indeed your situation, then life will certainly run you over. One of the more interesting characteristics of the torpedo is that after every search it becomes smarter or more discerning. The torpedo learns how to “refine” its search mode with every attempt. Like the torpedo, by trying new things, you as an individual will “refine” your search “wants.” You will become smarter and quicker to grasp what really makes you happy. With every attempt at achieving success, you will get to know yourself that much better. The end result: Your searches get shorter and the chances of you hitting the target increase.

Watch a child who has a birthday party and receives many gifts. As the child opens each gift, he or she will sift through the ones they like and the ones they don’t really care for. Over time though, the great toys become O.K. toys and get played with less and less often. Why? Because, the child has had the experience of the toy and is now ready for a change.

Are you ready for change? Are you willing to go into the search mode...again?

How often does it happen that you get excited about some new project and then lose interest as time goes on? How often do you have a great idea or inspiration, but then lose interest in it?

When you lose interest, you’re left wondering why. This hot-to-cold spell begins to undermine your confidence a bit. You can’t seem to explain to yourself why you’ve lost interest. You then start second-guessing yourself and your ability to make good decisions when something new comes about.

The answer to this seemingly difficult conundrum can be found in the analogy of the child opening gifts mentioned earlier. Once you’ve had the experience (i.e., been there, done that), you are now in a position to judge if it is something you really enjoy doing. With every experience you gain greater knowledge or insight into what you like.

For every experience you have, you need to make a choice. When you lose interest in some new experience you are just trying out, do you view the attempt as a learning experience or as a failure in your thinking? If you chose the former, a learning experience, then

you're on the right track. As we explore our environment, we learn what gives us pleasure and what doesn't. It's only human.

With every new experience, you as a person are transformed. Once you've had an experience, you are no longer the same. With every newfound experience, your nature changes and you learn and grow. Instead of second-guessing yourself (i.e., beating yourself up for changing your mind), begin to ask yourself this simple yet important question: "Why did I lose interest?" Ask yourself questions about what aspects of the project you did and did not find appealing. What was it about this idea that made you lose interest? Conversely, what attracted you to it in the first place?

By questioning or having this internal dialogue, you begin to refine your thought process and your search patterns. You aren't thinking failure; you're thinking like a torpedo. You're thinking and refining your thoughts about what you really want. You are defining the road back to you by refining what makes you happy.

Oftentimes, we lose interest after we learn what we had to learn from that particular experience. It's only natural to get bored after you've learned what "you wanted to learn" from the experience.

Other times, when we try something new, we realize that it wasn't the experience we thought it was going to be.

Whatever the answer, you are smarter and more in touch with what will make you happy as a result of the experience. And remember, if you decide to move on to something better or different, it's O.K.

"Never rent your goals; buy into them!"

Sometimes you do things because others have convinced you they would be good for you. You often look at what others are doing and you try to mimic them in order to replicate their abundance or happiness. You take their goals and try to make them your own. This co-opting of goals is a failed strategy from the start.

When you take your cues about what you want from others, you will ultimately end up being unhappy. Why? Because your "goals" aren't yours. They don't belong to you; you rented them. You can't rent goals from others. It doesn't work!

Have you ever rented a car? Do you take as good care of the rental as you do your own car? Of course not! When something belongs to you, you protect it or take care of it. The opposite is true also. If it isn't yours, you won't protect or care for it as well as if it were your own.

The answer to the question as to "why" you lose interest after being so excited may be found in that you never really wanted it in the first place; you just thought you did (Read this sentence again.).

You may have seen others doing it and thought you would be good at it too or you accepted the "I could do that so much better" mentality. In both instances, you allowed your desire to rent

someone else's goal take priority over going after your own personal goal.

As any financial investor will tell you, renting is always more expensive than buying over the long run. In the end, you receive no equity for your rental payments or the dues you put in. Don't rent your goals; buy into them.

"The first casualty of success is ego."

Let me illustrate my point by telling you a story about the time I was cajoled into doing something I didn't really want to do by others who thought I should do it. When I started high school, some of my friends convinced me that I should play basketball. They kept telling me how good I would be because of my height and the advantage it would give me over other players.

I decided to go ahead and join their team at the YMCA. To get to the games, I had to ride the Chicago "EL," the subway. This little fact will play a significant role in what came after my fateful decision to play basketball.

In our first game, we were going up against a team who had a reputation of beating everyone they played. On their team was a kid who measured a mere five feet tall. He was nicknamed "Skywalker," after a famous Denver Nugget player, David Thompson, who at the time was known for his leaping ability (pre-Michael Jordan).

Here's the scene. It was a musty YMCA gym and the bleachers were filled to the brim with unruly high school students who came to see one person, the Skywalker. Skywalker was the man!

During one instance in the game, I remember going up for a rebound, thinking I had it. Out of nowhere, from behind, another pair of hands showed up to grab the ball as well; they belonged to the Skywalker. I don't know where he came from, but he also latched onto the ball and we both went crashing to the floor, clutching the ball as we did so. All I could hear from the crowd as we wrestled for control was a loud, "Ooooooooooh!" They too couldn't believe he went up that high over my back.

The referee blew the whistle and called a jump ball. For those of you unfamiliar with the term, when two players are fighting for control of the ball, play is stopped and the two players must face off while their teammates surround them in a circle. The referee then tosses the ball up in the air between the two opposing players who were wrestling for the ball at the time of the call. The objective is to time your leap so you can tap it to one of your players and then the game resumes.

So there I stood, 6'2", standing face-to-face with a guy who barely came up to my chest. The referee blew the whistle and tossed the ball up between us. What happened next is something I've been trying to forget for a long time (I need to find a "thought exorcist"

for this one). As we both leapt into the air, Skywalker shot straight up past me in a single bound. I believe his stomach was at my eye level and I was already in the air!!! He easily out-jumped me and tapped the ball to his teammate.

The students in the bleachers went crazy! No, I mean they went nuts! At first, I heard quiet gasps of disbelief; that was followed by an eruption of laughter and taunting. The crowd did not let that moment go unnoticed and I never felt so small as I did at that very point in time. How could a kid that short out-jump someone as tall as me?

Oh, if only that were the end of it. To make matters worse (or better, depending on whose perspective you take), I twisted my ankle in the first quarter of play and had to sit on the bench in pain, now hurting both emotionally and physically. I decided not to wait around for three more quarters of play and chose to go home before the swelling got worse.

It was dark when I stepped out of the YMCA gym and descended the subway steps across the street. The station platform was empty and scary like it always was, but when you're mentally and physically hurting, things just seem a bit worse than they normally do.

I wanted to get on a train ASAP because the subway platform at night was not the place to be, especially if you were in no condition to run like I was.

The station was known as an A & B station. That meant both "A" trains and "B" trains would make a stop there. I was hoping for the "A" train because it would drop me off in a friendlier neighborhood where I could limp my way home. I didn't want a "B" train on this particular night because it took me seven blocks further and dropped me into a neighborhood where a rival gang hung out at a Laundromat located right underneath the station. When it came to kicking ass, they were not particular about their victim, if you know what I mean.

So there I was, waiting in pain, replaying the jump ball scene and crowd reaction in my head while my ankle thumped away with pain. I kept looking around, staying very alert to my surroundings in an effort to make sure no one snuck up on me.

Finally, I heard the rumble of the train coming around the bend and like a Vegas gambler playing craps, I chanted to myself, "C'mon 'A' train. Let it be the 'A' train."

Given the way my luck was going thus far, it didn't surprise me to see a "B" train come around on the tracks. I now had a choice: stay on the subway platform where it wasn't safe and wait for the next train, which could be an "A," or take my chances at the "B" station and hope no one was hanging out at the Laundromat. My injured ankle was hurting bad and I needed to sit for a while. I decided to gamble on the "B" train and get on. I could only hope that no one

would be hanging out at the Laundromat when I arrived at my destination.

Twenty minutes later, the train approached the “B” station and I got out. As I approached the turnstile, I could only see parts of the Laundromat across the street. At this point, I still couldn’t tell if there was anyone hanging around. Now, in Chicago, once you exit the subway turnstile, you’re not getting back in.

I decided to risk it. I threw on my backpack and exited the station. As I cleared the turnstile, I looked across the street and yep, there they were, six gang members hanging out, smoking and drinking.

I reminded myself not to panic. I just put my head down and started to limp towards home. I was hoping they would notice my backpack and realize I was a student who posed no threat to their territory.

No more than 30 seconds could’ve passed before I heard from across the street, “Hey you!”

I ignored them. Then the statement got louder, “Hey you!” and I had to look over. I pretended I couldn’t hear them and gestured toward home, hoping that they’d understand I was just passing through.

No such luck. They began walking in the same direction as I was only on the other side of the street. They kept yelling things to convince me to stop and come over to talk with them. No way! I refused to stop.

What made things worse was my twisted ankle, which they were obviously unaware of. I believe they misinterpreted my *limping for pimping*. Now for those of you not from the neighborhood, walking with a “pimp” is the equivalent of walking with a “cocky swagger,” which I wasn’t trying to do; I was just in pain. But they didn’t know that and I knew it wasn’t helping. I believe they took my limp for a swagger.

Have you ever watched “Wild Kingdom” or the Discovery Channel? Recall the scenes where the antelopes or zebras know the predator is in the vicinity, but they remain calm and alert. They serenely move away from the threat as the predator continues to move in until that very moment when a choice has to be made: flee or fight.

Well, I reached that point and I chose to run. I was so scared of getting caught that I forgot the pain in my leg. I managed to jump a few fences, running through back alleys and gangways. I moved through the neighborhood labyrinth with ease until I finally lost them.

When I got home, I told my mother about the game and how I had twisted my ankle. I purposely forgot to mention, however, the chase scene. That final run made my ankle worse and I was still limping, not pimping, two weeks later.

Now why this long story? Well, how did I get into this situation? How did this happen to me? Or better yet, *why* did it happen to me? The moral of this long story can be encapsulated in this statement: We often get into situations, not because we wanted to, but because others convinced us to.

Am I saying that you shouldn't be responsible or accountable for your actions? No, quite the opposite!

This story is a reminder of how being seduced into doing things you otherwise would not do can lead to unexpected and unfavorable results.

I had no business playing basketball because I wasn't as good as the other kids. I didn't understand the game and I wasn't in any condition to play. Up until that point, I had never played organized ball so I was unfamiliar with the rules and the strategies of the game. My friends convinced me by reassuring me that my height would be enough. I jumped at the chance to play because I wanted them to be right and I wanted to be good at something.

When you do things because others think you'll be good at it, you may find yourself in a similar predicament: unprepared and bruised. But the real damage is not physical, it's emotional. When things don't turn out the way you expected them to, your self-esteem suffers in two ways. First, you failed because you weren't prepared (You assumed you could do it without preparation.), and second, you failed at something not because it was something you wanted, but because someone else convinced you it would be good for you. In either case, you feel worse off, less competent and more unsure about yourself.

We've all had friends, family or significant others who have said, "I think you would be great at this." Don't let others convince you until you've researched the opportunity and concluded for yourself that getting involved would be a good idea. Only then can you set realistic expectations and timeframes for your success. Knowing what to expect and how long things will take to happen reduces anxiety and self-doubt.

Hear others, listen to yourself.

Again, *the toughest road to success is the road back to you.* You have to learn to ask yourself the tough questions. You must then listen to yourself and be brutally honest. In the end, if you don't, you'll only be lying to yourself.

Strategies for helping you listen to yourself:

- Would I love doing this?

- If money weren't important, would I still love doing this?
- Am I doing this because it's cool, or because I find meaning or purpose in it?
- Am I doing it to impress others or is it something I really want?

The toughest road to success is the road back to you.

Starting point: If you don't know what you want, begin to exclude the things you know you don't want. Getting back to what you love and want to do begins with simply being honest with yourself; "To thy own self be true."

Learning to listen to yourself about what really makes you happy isn't easy. But then again, if finding out what you wanted to do in life were easy, where would the challenge lie?

Final note: When you do things for the wrong reasons (for example, becoming an engineer or playing basketball), you will eventually wind up being miserable. The effects of discontent will not immediately be apparent, but they will make themselves evident and known over time.

L.O.G.I.C. OF SUCCESS

“Behold the turtle. He makes progress only when he sticks his neck out.”

– James Bryant Conant

OVERCOMING FEAR

Once you’ve figured it out (what you want to do with your life), the next step is to take the necessary measures towards achieving your vision. Start out with the premise that failure is part of success. Like an airplane that takes off every day, somewhere along the way that plane has to make adjustments for changes in temperature, traffic and other conditions that were not anticipated. Overcoming failure is nothing more than taking the time to make minor adjustments on your way to success.

I remember moving my family to Argentina as Vice President of Sales. I was in charge of managing 26 countries with five regional offices, Argentina being one of them.

The most sales the company had in the region in its ten-year history of doing business there was \$14M. When I arrived in Argentina to revitalize and build the sales department in that region, I had my work cut out for me. The office itself had never produced more than \$400K in revenues and my challenge was to meet and exceed that number.

I remember sitting in my Argentine office one day, looking out the window and wondering, “How the heck am I going to grow this business with problems in Mexico, Brazil, Puerto Rico and other hot spots?”

A confession to you the reader: I was scared! Please don’t tell anyone.

I had no clue, just an idea of how I would turn things around and make “sales” happen. I remember sitting in my office thinking, “What the hell did I get myself into? How can I grow this business beyond \$14M when no one in the past has been able to do so? How will I manage the people and budgets?”

Forget the movie *Sleepless in Seattle*, I was “Sleepless in Argentina,” trying to map out a strategy.

When you can't go back, you go forward. At that point, wishes become necessities and you find ways to make things happen.

One day, while speaking with a customer on the phone, I kept hearing a lot of jack-hammering outside my window. I tried shutting the window but that didn't seem to help much. I remember apologizing to the customer for the background noise and agreed to continue our phone call later that afternoon during our scheduled meeting.

After hanging up the phone, I again opened the window and looked at the shorter building next door. On the rooftop, I saw several men using this scrapping machine to rip apart the flat roof. Little did I know at the time that this would go on for weeks and would soon begin to drive me nuts

Somewhere in the third or fourth week, I noticed the silence. I opened the window and to my surprise, the men had finishing stripping the rooftop. They were now laying ceramic tiles on this wide roof about the size of two tennis courts. I remember thinking, “That's going to take them a very long time.”

One day, I remember looking out only to realize they were three-quarters of the way complete. “Amazing! How were they able to lay so many small tiles so quickly?” I thought.

It's funny how you don't realize how much progress is being made until you step away from it for a while.

AHA!

At that very moment, my mindset for building a sales territory was adopted. Instead of focusing in on the enormous task of increasing sales for the region as a whole, I decided to focus on building the company's sales slowly.

It was this mindset, this Argentine version of eating an elephant one-bite-at-a-time that helped me maintain the patience and balance needed to grow the business. Each of the 26 countries would now be considered a “tile.” I set out to make sure that each tile I laid was positioned correctly in the marketplace. The results would be measured over time.

The result? When I first took over, I finished the year with no unexpected change at \$14M. It's always good to take over and not lose ground. Whew! I was relieved.

The second year I finished at \$45M and by the end of the third year, I had grown the business to \$98M. The Argentina office itself went from \$400K in sales to \$5M in just three short years.

From this, I learned that when you break things up into smaller pieces, you first begin to feel a sense of control. And as you begin to take action, you feel a sense of momentum. You no longer feel as though you're standing still. And taking action is the best therapy when you feel things aren't going your way.

Every time I got frustrated or felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the task at hand, I thought tiles. When I wondered if I was making progress, I quickly reminded myself that results are measured over time rather than daily.

The second thing I noticed was how each positive step or action reduced my fear factor. Taking small steps or "little actions" made me feel in control and gave me a sense of accomplishment. Confucius said, "It is not a matter of how fast or slow, but simply a matter of you moving."

What personal experience or example can you draw from for the next time you need to break things up into small pieces?

Fear will paralyze you. Fear causes inaction. Inaction, in turn, causes low self-esteem. And low self-esteem causes fear. This is the cycle of fear that you have to avoid.

But how real is your fear? Why are you afraid of taking the small steps toward, or laying the tiles of, your vision?

Most of what we worry about never comes to pass. The University of Michigan conducted a study and came to these conclusions:

60% of our fears are unwarranted and NEVER come to pass.

20% of our fears are focused on our PAST, which is completely out of our control.

10% of our fears are based on things so petty they make NO difference in our lives.

Of the remaining 10% of our fears, only 4-5% could be considered justifiable

Source: University of Michigan

Wow! Think about this for a few moments. Ninety-five percent of the time, you're afraid for no reason at all. Is this the fear that holds you back from taking those small steps toward big things?

Learned Helplessness

Many of us scare ourselves because we are accustomed or have been conditioned to think more in terms of failure rather than success. Given a new challenge or change in our situation, we are more likely to adopt a fatalistic or pessimistic attitude. Why?

Dr. Martin Seligman of the University of Pennsylvania did a study on dogs. He observed that some dogs, when given a mild form of electro-shock (like the shock you get when you touch someone after walking on a carpet), would simply lie down and whimper.

Intrigued by this phenomenon, he decided to do a two-stage experiment to determine if surrendering, as the dogs were clearly doing, was something natural or if it was a conditioned response.

First, Seligman established two groups of dogs, Group A and Group B. He then took one of the dogs from Group A and placed it into a harness where the dog would be given mild shocks periodically (Note: No animals were hurt or injured during these experiments.). A bar was placed in front of the dog, which it could tap to stop the mild shocks. Eventually, all of the dogs in Group A figured it out and no sooner was the mild shock applied than they tapped the bar.

They then took dogs from Group B and placed them one at a time in a similar harness where they were given the same form of mild shocks. But in the case of Group B, no tap bar to stop the shocks was provided. These dogs would simply whimper when the shock was applied.

In the second stage of the experiment, a “shuttle box” was created with two compartments. The center of this box contained a low barrier which allowed the dogs to get from one side of the box’s compartment to the other.

They then took dogs from Group A and placed them, one-by-one, in one side of the shuttle box, where a similar shock treatment would again be applied.

Eventually, the Group A dogs figured out, much like tapping the bar, that if they just stepped over the center barrier to the other side of the box, the shocks would stop.

The dogs from group B, on the other hand, were put into the same compartment and mild shocks were again administered. But unlike Group A, which learned to move to the other side of the box after receiving the initial shocks, this group of dogs just lay down and whimpered, never even attempting to step to the other side.

Conclusion: The Group A dogs were conditioned to find a way to alleviate the discomfort of the shocks. So, when placed in a new environment (the box) with a new set of conditions (step over the barrier versus tapping a bar), they figured it out. They needed to find a solution and curiosity allowed them to step over the barrier.

Group B, on the other hand, had learned during the first stage of the experiment that there was nothing they could do about their situation. So, in the second stage of the experiment, it came as no great surprised that they simply gave up.

The dogs in Group B had been conditioned for helplessness and *saw no need to even try* to move. Even when their situation or environment was changed, it didn't matter. The dogs had already accepted the mindset of "there's nothing I can do."

Many of us in life fall into the Group B category. Instead of seeking out alternatives or solutions to our daily pains of coping with societal pressures, we simply give up or give in. The only real difference is that *instead of whimpering we do a lot of whining*.

When you accept your condition and affirm that there is nothing you can do to change your situation, you're done! When I took the VP position in Argentina, I had no clear idea of what I needed to do. I just had ideas of what needed to be accomplished. And yes, along the way, I committed many mistakes. They were in the minority, however, when compared to all the good things that began happening.

No matter who the person, entrepreneur or CEO is, they're lying if they tell you they have all the answers. They don't!

What real winners have is a strong idea or sense of what needs to be done. They also have it clear in their minds that some of those ideas will most likely fail. Does that deter them? Of course not! Why? Winners condition themselves for success.

Like the dogs in Group A, winners know that in order for things to change, they have to try something. In the dogs' case, they realized tapping the bar would stop the discomfort (i.e., shocks). Isn't that what we're trying to do on a daily basis, stop the discomfort?

The Law of Averages

Success is a numbers' game. You have to keep trying different things until you find that single act or a certain combination of actions that will change things for the better. The more you play (i.e., try), the better your chances are at winning. The Law of Averages eventually kicks in and as the saying goes, "If you swing long enough, you're bound to hit something."

One of your biggest obstacles to living the way you want to live is fear: the fear of failing, the fear of the unknown, the fear of humiliation, the fear of losing money, the fear of changing careers, the fear of everything that involves change.

I Wish I Had Some of That

Sometimes in speaking with people, they tell me about how they've found their calling in business or in the service of a spiritual or enlightened being. They speak with such conviction and passion that I have often walked away thinking, "Man, what is that person smoking?" Later, after reflecting on our conversation, I'll think, "Yeah, but I wish I had some of that!" I wish I had some of that enthusiasm.

These are people who have a driving belief and are committed to what they're doing. Now I'm not talking about the person who says, "I really love my job" with a \$2 smile forced across his face. I'm talking about people who, when they speak to you about what they're doing, you can see it in their eyes; you see excitement and you feel their enthusiasm. Do you know what I'm talking about? I'm sure you do.

There was one thing that I didn't sense in any of their voices, and that is fear. Their newfound excitement, purpose and meaning has overrun them and helped them overcome their fear. They are now so excited and enthusiastic about what they are doing that there is no longer any room for fear.

I still thought to myself, "Man, I wish I had some of that!"

We all are always searching for something to give our lives purpose or added meaning. Like you, I sat many-o-nights wondering, "Why can't I get excited about something? Why can't I find that burning passion that'll drive me?"

In the movie *City Slickers*, with Billy Crystal and Jack Palance, there's a scene where Palance's character looks at Crystal and tells him that his purpose in life is about finding, as he holds his index finger up, that "one thing."

In response, Crystal asks, "What is the one thing?"

Palance gives him a roundabout schoolyard answer that goes along the lines of, "That's for you to find out."

I often think about purpose and meaning, like I'm sure many of you do as well. I too want that driving, purposeful force others seem to have. I believe not having that one driving force makes a person feel a little despondent or maybe even discouraged at not having found it.

I encourage you to begin to take the mental time necessary to understand yourself. Here's a five-step process you may want to try to help get yourself going on finding that "one thing."

Step1: Start with this simple strategy: If you can't figure out what you want to do, at a minimum, begin to define things you DON'T want to do. Begin by taking a mental inventory of the things you don't enjoy. Begin sifting through the types of jobs you've had in the past. Think about each one and what you didn't like about it. What key aspects of these jobs did you hate?

Step 2: Now, create a mental list of all the things you did like about each of these jobs. What aspect of each job did you really enjoy doing?

Step 3: Next, think of certain jobs where the majority of the workload is doing those things you like.

Step 4: Having created a general list of potentially good situations, begin to “imagine” yourself in this ideal position. Daydream about being in such a position and performing the job.

Step 5: Now, the crucial step: Fast forward your mental career and imagine again where it would lead you. Do you like where this career path will take you?

The last step is the toughest to reconcile when trying to decide whether or not to go after something. It’s easy to imagine what you may want, but when you ask yourself that long-term “will I be happy in the long run” question, it forces you to analyze your true motivations and desires for wanting to do it.

An Epiphany

One day, an interesting thought hit me that broke the “find-your-purpose” logjam in my head. I had an epiphany, or moment of enlightenment, while driving down the highway as cars were zooming past me, breaking the sound barrier.

As I drove, I began to have this internal dialogue with myself on the concept of purpose.

Now we’ve all had these internal conversations with ourselves. We have an initiating thought side (I’ll call it side A) and a critical side that analyzes the thought itself and plays the devil’s advocate (I’ll call it side B). On this particular day, I had one of these episodic conversations.

Step into my head for a second and listen in on the conversation I had with myself this day.

WARNIING: Stepping inside another person’s thought process may be dangerous and disturbing.

So, this thought hits me while I’m driving:

A: “If purpose won’t come to me, why don’t I go to it?”

No sooner than that first salvo of neurons fired that thought, a second round of neurons fired back saying,

B: “How the hell does that work? You’re really losing it, amigo.”

A: “No, I’m not losing it.”

B: “Well, tell me, how can you get a purpose?”

A: “Well, that’s not what I meant.”

B: “Well, what did you mean?”

A: “I mean maybe purpose doesn’t just happen and I have to find it.”

B: “Yeah sure, under a rock?”

A: “No, you idiot, I mean get a purpose.”

B: “Yeah, just go down to the local Sam’s Club; they sell them wholesale! Uh yeah, here’s a packet of purpose. The directions read: Just add one cup of hope, two teaspoons of stupidity but don’t add too much, you’ll get brain mush. Ha, ha...”

A: “Screw you! I meant maybe since I don’t have a purpose I should get myself one.”

B: “Well hell, if you’re thinking like that, why don’t you just invent a purpose?”

A: “Because you can’t just give yourself purpose.”

B: “Why not?”

A: “Because, it needs to have meaning.”

B: “Well, then just assign it a meaning!”

STOP brain freeze.

At that moment, a ray of light shone through my car window and I heard Gregorian chants in the background. But that moment of enlightenment was short-lived when I discovered I had just come out from under an overpass and the ray of light was the sun shining through my sunroof. Then I realized that the Gregorian chant I was hearing in the background was actually a radio commercial for a carpet cleaning product with *The Lion King* soundtrack playing in the background...a far cry from a calling.

This thought, nonetheless, was an epiphany. *The idea of assigning myself a purpose bordered on motivational heresy.* Purpose was supposed to “*happen to you.*” Purpose is supposed to come cloaked via unintended consequences or a life-changing event. Remember what your parents used to tell you, “You just can’t go around inventing things.”

In mathematics, people derive equations and solutions in their own specific way. Although there are rules to follow, there’s always more than ONE WAY to arrive at a conclusion or solution.

My discovery of how to obtain purpose worked for me. I came to the conclusion that having purpose is all about assigning meaning (something that means a lot to you) to an activity. I repeat: *Purpose is assigning a significant personal meaning to an activity.* The key word here is significant. The activity has to mean something to you.

What makes your purpose special is its uniqueness. It’s yours. No one can duplicate it. No one can really understand it like you do, because it is yours alone. It is like a fingerprint, unique in its contours, that identifies who you are.

When you “find religion,” a cause or a job you love, it’s all about assigning a significant meaning to that activity. When I speak of meaning, I do so in terms of a full commitment to something you strongly believe in. So strong is your belief that when you fast forward your life and see yourself down the road, you know you’ll be glad you chose that direction.

Assigning oneself a purpose is much more than just saying, “I like that idea; I’m going to do it.”

It’s more than seeing some infomercial and saying, “Yep, that’s for me.”

It’s more than just getting excited because someone asked you to join a group or business and you say, “Yep, that’s for me.”

In Chapter One, you learned that listening to others instead of yourself is a shortcut to disappointment. What tends to happen when you take this approach? You usually find yourself feeling disenchanted with your decision. You find yourself unable to become motivated to do whatever it is you agreed to do. It’s taking all your energy just to get excited, until one day you say, “Nope, that’s not for me.”

Assigning yourself a purpose is about finding or discovering something that you consider to be valuable and worthy of your physical and mental time. Let me give you some examples:

John Walsh, from the television series, “America’s Most Wanted,” went into doing what he does when his son was kidnapped and murdered. He assigned himself a purpose by giving it a meaning. He didn’t want anyone to have to

experience what he had to go through, so he dedicated his life to finding criminals.

Randy Gage, the professional speaker, made millions and then quit. After a one-year respite, he came back with a renewed vigor because, as he tells it, “I wanted to make an impact in people’s lives.” What Randy discovered was that money didn’t give his life meaning. His newfound purpose was now based on the meaning he had assigned it during his time off. He saw a higher value in helping other people either become financially or, better still, emotionally independent. He wanted to impact others beyond a paycheck. It was no longer about how much or how much more he could make. It was now about legacy and how he wanted to be remembered. He had replaced monetary meaning with something more personal to him...his unique message that he felt he had to get out to the world.

When you hear the calling of God and choose to serve Him, you have assigned the activity of spreading the Gospel a purpose. When you decide to donate your time or money to a charity, you have assigned that activity a purpose. When you go to work and you love what you do, you have assigned that activity a purpose. When you decide to build your own business, you have assigned that activity a purpose.

Something wonderful happens when you have purpose in your life; fear and uncertainty subside, as I already mentioned. You now have a vector, a direction with magnitude. Your enthusiasm and the belief in what you are doing squeezes out fear and thereby can assuage any uncertainty you may have about what you’re doing.

When you give meaning to an activity, all of a sudden life doesn’t seem that dark anymore. Bright spots are easier to see. You look forward to the next time. You can’t wait to do something. You don’t want to see things end. Fear has left the building!

When I die, I don’t want my last thought to be that I changed the world, because someone else will eventually alter it no sooner than I depart. When I die, I want to think, “I gave to the world, but most important, I gave my life meaning and a purpose.”

Purpose is about assigning significant meaning to an activity that you choose. No one but you can make this choice.

Give yourself the time for proper reflection and contemplation. Take the mental time to think about what you can assign meaning to. Be brutally honest with yourself.

Seek meaning wherever it is to be found. We’ve all heard the anecdote about the guy who was under a streetlamp, on his knees

looking for something, when a passerby asked, “What are you looking for?”

“My money,” replied the man.

“Where did you drop it?”

Pointing to a darkened alley a few feet away, the man replied, “Over there by that dark alley.”

Puzzled, the passerby asked, “Well, if you dropped it over there, why are you looking here?”

The man responded, “Because there is light here and it’s dark over there.”

Sometimes we search for things where it may be convenient (i.e., where the light shines), but we never make the effort to explore those hidden places within us (the dark areas) where our true purpose in life may be found.

Search those dark corners of your mind; your dreams are probably waiting to be rediscovered. You know the dreams I’m talking about, the ones you put away “just for a while” until you got situated in life...the dreams you compromised away with every new job offer, promotion or pay increase. Yes, those dreams!

“Who Do You Fear, Him or Me?”

I was watching one of those bad action movies in which a drug kingpin is forced to eliminate his enemy. He tells one of his henchmen to carry out the execution order. The henchman hesitates because he knows the task of eliminating the enemy will be difficult and dangerous. Seeing the henchman hesitate, the kingpin walks up to him, staring at him with eyes wide open and a wicked look on his face, and says, “Who do you fear, him or me?”

Corny? Maybe. Poignant? Yes.

The henchman now has to choose between the two things he fears, his boss or the enemy he was to execute. And at that very moment, he has to make a decision as to whom he fears less. He decides to go after the enemy since he fears him less than his own boss. In life, we are faced with the same dilemma: do nothing or do something. In either case, we are afraid of both. The fear of doing nothing may lead to a life of regret. The fear of doing may lead to failure. Which one do you fear most?

Here are ten simple rules or guidelines to help you deal with and accept failure as part of the success process:

- 1) Learn to appreciate the value of failure: Start believing that failure is there to help you get to your intended destination.
- 2) Don’t take failure personally: Like success, failure plays no favorites. It is color-blind, gender-blind and agnostic.

- 3) Allow failure to redirect you: Failures are like road signs, guiding you in the direction “you need to be going” instead of the way you were headed.
- 4) Learn to laugh at yourself and failure: Don’t take yourself so seriously. Learn to enjoy the process of growth and the cycles of failure and success. When failure comes, just smirk at it with confidence and say, “I’m gonna figure this out, just you wait.”
- 5) Ask and keep asking “Why?” Always ask yourself why things didn’t turn out. Self-analysis and evaluation are the keys to learning from your failure and achieving eventual success.
- 6) Learn from failure: There’s a saying that goes, “The definition of an idiot is doing something the same way, over and over again, expecting a different outcome.” Growth is an iterative process of learning from our mistakes.
- 7) Don’t let failure beat you down: Failure will try to convince you to give up. Failure will try to demoralize and destabilize your intent on success. Don’t allow it to do so. Think of failure as a helping hand rather than a fist trying to beat you down.
- 8) Use failure to measure your growth: All steps toward success can be measure by the distance we’ve traveled and by how much we have grown personally and economically. Growth comes from action and experience, not from standing still and doing nothing.
- 9) Zoom back and put failure in perspective: We always see ourselves as the center and most important object in life. Zoom back and take the time to appreciate all the good things that are happening to you. Zoom back and be grateful for all the little things you take for granted. Zoom back and realize that the majority of people in the world do not have the opportunities we have here in the United States.
- 10) Never give up: The biggest mistake one can commit and the greatest failure a person can experience is that of giving up. Do not fear failure; fear giving up.

The football coach Mike Ditka put it succinctly: “You never really lose until you quit trying.” You must learn to view failure as a healthy process of reaching success. You must learn that failure is a guide to success, not an obstruction.

The most pathetic state of human nature is one of total submission, one of both body and soul. What holds us back or paralyzes us from trying is the fear of failure. The irony? *If we're too afraid to act, by not acting, we guarantee the very thing we fear the most: failure.*

L.O.G.I.C. OF SUCCESS

“Never mistake motion for action.”

– Ernest Hemingway

GOAL SETTING

Once you determine what it is you want to do with your life, once you figure out what it is that will feed your soul, once you overcome the fear of doing it, where do you begin?

Remember *The Wizard of Oz*? I’m reminded of the munchkins when Dorothy wanted directions to Emerald City, the place where she could find answers to all her questions. The munchkins instructed her to “Follow the yellow brick road.” Oh, if life’s answers were only highlighted with yellow bricks for us to follow!

When I was young, for Christmas one year my parents gave me one of those police cars with the shining lights, loud siren noise and a Johnny Law action figure that rode inside. Underneath the car was this circular rotating mechanism with wheels that allowed the car to change directions every time it bumped into the furniture or walls. I’d hit the ON button and the car would come to life. A loud siren noise would fill the room as the flashing lights flickered on the walls and furniture around it. The car would bump into the furniture like a blind person trying to find her way through a new room.

Sometimes it would bump an object, back up and then dart off in a new direction. Other times, it would abruptly change directions by trying to go either left or right.

I’d sit back and watch the car, just to see how long it would take to move from one side of the room to the other; I’d try to count the number of bump-and-direction changes. Sometimes I’d leave the room only to come back and see the car stuck in the corner. “Design flaw,” I thought. The car would try to go left, turn right or back up. But it didn’t matter what the car did, it couldn’t seem to find its way out of the corner. So I’d stare at my little car, just bumping away in the corner making a lot of noise but going nowhere, hoping it would eventually figure out a way to bump and run its way out. The car was truly cornered.

Today, the image of that toy car represents a problem to me that many of us have today in trying to reach our goal or destination. Every time we run up against an obstacle, we try to go left, turn right or back up.

In our everyday life, as soon as we step outside into the working world, our brain lights go on. Our mouths start making noise on some cellular phone and we're off in some direction for some meeting. And no sooner than we encounter an obstacle, we back up and go right or left, heading off in the direction of least resistance until we encounter our next obstacle. Like the toy car, we seem to be aimlessly moving in no specific direction and with no specific destination in mind; we're just blindly moving.

Many of us don't have goals. We set upon a course (career) and simply go through the motions of doing it because...well, just because.

I find it funny how being in motion, constantly moving, seems to comfort people and give them a sense of accomplishment. We feel better about ourselves when we *think* we're moving. It doesn't matter if we're going in the right direction, as long as we are moving.

"You can't allow yourself to confuse activity with productivity."

The toy maker had one specific criterion in mind when he built the car: to keep the car in motion no matter what obstacles it ran into. The car was designed to stay in motion. Its only goal was to keep moving; the wheel mechanism underneath the car rotated in a random fashion to ensure that. The car was not designed to have a goal or a specific destination.

You, much like the car, often behave in this manner. You want to keep moving, but you aren't really going anywhere, or worse, you don't know where you're going. You bump into obstacles and go around them by changing direction. Then *you deceive yourself by calling it planning* or making the claim that you've succeeded in finding a great opportunity.

You lie to yourself to justify a change in direction. No new opportunity has presented itself. You bumped into an obstacle, changed your course, went along in that direction and rationalized it as part of your intended goal.

The truth is that when you step outside into the world and *let reality happen to you*, you're no better off than the bump car.

True, some people still manage to find success, even under these random conditions. But this type of success equates to the toy bumper car finding its way into the next room by chance, not by design. My question to you is: Do you want to reach your goal by chance, or by design?

“Life would be pretty flat without bumps.”

Bumps or obstacles in life are part of the terrain, the social structure of achievement. All of us, sooner or later, encounter obstacles on our road to life success. But you must shift your thinking and learn to view obstacles as part of the success process. If it weren't for obstacles, success would be meaningless. Why? Because if success were attainable by everyone, then what would be its measure? If everything you tried you succeeded at, again, what would be the measure of true success?

The value of success should be measured against your abilities to overcome obstacles, your ability to overcome adversity in order to achieve growth and prosperity.

I used to think that devising or writing down goals was a waste of time. I had the Nike® mentality, “Just do it,” and added, “and let's see what happens.”

I've come to understand the importance of “setting goals” today in a different way. Call it maturity, call it wisdom, call it what you might, but my mindset regarding the purpose of setting goals has changed dramatically.

I now see goal-setting as essential because it limits, if not eliminates altogether, the temptation to react emotionally and be redirected by a given situation. By “situation,” I mean an unforeseen obstacle or challenge presenting itself.

When you react emotionally without a sense of direction, you begin to lose sight of what was and still is important to you. A goal is a reminder of a commitment you've made to yourself.

If you can't keep a commitment to yourself, how can you keep them to others?

Every time we run into trouble or obstacles, we change direction because it's convenient to do so. But every choice not to pursue our dreams comes with a price. When we take the easy way, what are we *exchanging for convenience*?

Many of us choose to take the path of least resistance when confronted with a challenge because we've been conditioned over time to evade dilemmas and run in the other direction. Isn't that convenient?

You can run, but you can't hide. Life continues to get rather crowded and complicated, thereby increasing the chances of you bumping into obstacles exponentially. And, unless you learn to set goals and stick to them, you will continue to bump into the social furniture of life; you will bounce around in life, never being able to get anywhere.

Goals help keep you on track. Goals help you to establish a metric by which you can measure your progress. You shouldn't deny yourself the pleasure of being able to measure your progress. Time has a way of tempting you to forget what your original purpose or goal was. Goals are reminders of what you originally set out to do after some time has passed.

I want to share with you an experience I recently had, which I hope will illustrate how important it is to stick to your goals. I hope it will also show how doing so can save you time and money. Although this has less to do with achieving success, it has everything to do with keeping what's important clear in your mind.

We have become a society with an appetite to consume, particularly to buy. Technology, specifically the Internet, has made consumption more available to us than in the past. The other day, after two years of deferring my curiosity, I logged onto eBay for the first time to see what all the fuss was about. I *did* have a specific purpose or reason; I went online to purchase an audio book series for less than the retail price of eighty dollars.

So, I did a search and found the used item I wanted to bid on at a fraction of the cost. After registering and coughing up my credit card information, I was good-to-go and I placed my first bid. Now for those who've never used eBay, think of "virtual flea market meets silent auction," where you post your bid on the Internet. The bid process happens over the course of a few days or weeks. At the end of the designated time period, the winner with the highest bid is notified by email that they're the winner.

When you place a bid, you can outbid the next person in increments of \$0.50, depending on the going price. When I placed my bid, the system asked for my maximum bid price. In other words, the site wanted to know what the highest amount was I was willing to pay. The current bid on the audio series stood at ten dollars on the item I valued at twenty dollars (used). So, I placed my twenty-dollar maximum bid, with my opening bid fifty cents higher than the current bid (i.e., \$10.50). I soon learned that every time someone enters a higher bid, the system automatically ups my bid by fifty cents, keeping me as the top bidder.

When someone's bid exceeded my maximum bid of twenty dollars, I got an email notice saying essentially, "You've been outbid." At this point, my first impulse as a competitive creature was, "I'll have to bid higher." But I reminded myself that the reason I set the maximum at \$20 for the used tape series was because in my estimation it would not be a great deal if I

had to pay more. This reminder helped me resist the egoistic temptation to compete. I let the bid close, without challenging the highest bidder, and *lost* the item.

Now, let's review this situation and the thought processes that drove me to stop. Before I entered eBay and put in my bid, I knew I didn't want to pay more than twenty dollars for these items. This predetermined value was useful in helping me keep my emotions in check when I discovered I was outbid. Having a maximum *goal* in mind helped me stave off any feeling of wanting to compete (i.e., acting irrationally) and win merely for the sake of winning. Simply stated, I didn't want to get emotionally sucked in or be redirected away from my target price.

Ebay, like any other auction strategy, uses small increments (of fifty cents, in this particular case) to keep the bids going. You rationalize to yourself, "Oh, it's just another fifty cents. What's the big deal?" In sales, this is called "price creep." If you've ever been to a live auction, you've seen price creep firsthand. The auctioneer speaks in some foreign language where the only thing you understand is the price increment mentioned at the end of each sentence. The auctioneer's job is to keep the bid going with small increments in order to get people to lower their "price-barrier" and let their guard down. And, since the price increments are so small, people slowly get drawn into the spirit of bidding and lose sight of their purchasing goal.

Next thing you know, the bid is closed, and the buyer realizes they've exceeded their maximum goal price (sometimes greater than retail) and goes home with buyer's remorse (i.e., regret my purchase after the fact). There's a saying that goes, "People buy emotionally and rationalize it later."

Auctions count on the fact that you will not stick to your maximum goal by feeding on your insecurity of losing the item and not being able to find another one like it. They want you to think of it in terms of scarcity. When you buy into the scarcity scare, you bid beyond your maximum, where the objective of getting a good deal turns into the goal of winning the bid.

"Never think in terms of scarcity because there's always another opportunity just around the corner."

In life, failure counts on the fact that you will not stick to your goals. Failure wants you to react adversely and not think. Failure wants you to believe winning is everything, at any cost, even at the cost of not being happy with your decision.

My winning satisfaction on eBay was predicated on two things: getting the item I wanted AND getting the item at my price point. Notice there's an "AND" and not an "OR" between those two

objectives. I knew I would have buyer's remorse if I paid more than I had determined to be a good deal. So, by predetermining my price, I avoided getting into a bidding war.

Predetermined spending goals are no different from the predetermined achievement goals you make to yourself in your everyday life.

But, instead of sticking to a goal you've set, like the auctioneer, you slowly convince yourself to move away from your original aim. Many times, you are your own worst enemy.

Meeting goals, sticking to them, even when you are being prodded to move off of them, is the reason you despise making them.

Let me summarize the three major reasons I've pointed out on why you resist setting goals:

- First, you resent goals because they are metrics, landmarks or reminders of promises you made to yourself. And when you break promises, especially to yourself, you hate to be reminded of that fact. You'd rather drift onto the next big thing and rationalize your failure away by thinking this new direction was all for the better. Or, in the case of eBay, you'd like to rationalize a high bid away by reaffirming that although you paid a higher price, you still got a good deal.
- Second, you resent being held accountable by a goal. When you defer or break a promise made to yourself, you cry out, "But things have changed!" Deep down inside, however, you know that although your situation may have changed, your goals, your dreams, those things you want have not. I too have been a victim of this type of thinking. For many years in business I took promotions. I accepted higher positions for more money or a better opportunity of making more money. With every promotion or increase in pay, I rationalized the deferment of my goals by telling myself, "It was the right move for now." I drifted along with the tide of adulation and compensation, never struggling or even thinking of going against its current for many years. And, when I woke up from the drunken stupor of money and control, I realized I had cheated myself out of many years—years where I could've been working on my goals and paving the way to my dreams.
- The third reason you resent goals is that you want relief. You want relief from the struggle and you want it now! A goal takes much time to accomplish. It takes a lot of work and effort to reach your goals. But in the age of nano-technology and pico-speed processing, our attention spans continue to shrink as our need for achievement continues to

grow. The problem is, success can't be compressed by some new technology or algorithm in order for you to get it faster and cheaper. Success cannot be downloaded in seconds, "ripped" on a CD and handed to you anytime you desire it.

You resent goals because they put demands on your ability to be disciplined. Achievement of your goals requires you to be consistent. It requires giving the goal the appropriate amount of time and effort needed to bring it into fruition.

You resent discipline, because it taxes your mental toughness and mandates you to stay the course. Discipline requires you to keep the end in mind and not waiver from your commitment.

When you set a goal to get down (or get up in some cases) to a certain weight, you don't want to be reminded by anyone or anything that you did not meet your goal.

"You'd rather just let the goal quietly slide by for another year."

When you decide that "this is the year" where you are going to start your own business, you also don't want to be reminded about your goal as the year goes on.

"You'd rather just let the goal quietly slide by for another year."

When you don't take that vacation you've promised yourself this year, you don't want to be reminded the year is quickly coming to a close when you haven't even made plans yet. You don't want to be reminded.

"You'd rather just let the goal quietly slide by for another year."

You decide that this is the year you'll go to the university to earn or finish your degree. But you don't want to be reminded that you haven't even registered when the semester is already in progress.

"You'd rather just let the goal quietly slide by for another year."

Why do you stop short of meeting your goals? What is it in you that won't allow you to follow through on your commitment to yourself? Oftentimes, your inability to meet your objectives or goals is more than just a discipline problem. It may be much deeper. Maybe deep down inside you don't believe these goals are important enough to demand your discipline. In the case of returning to college, maybe you're doing it because your parents expect you to get a degree and major in such and such subject. Or perhaps your company requires you to have a degree in order to get promoted. In either case, it's not YOU-driven.

Maybe the reason you lose your enthusiasm or your motivating force to stay the course gets back to the “L” in the Logic of Success: Listening to yourself. If you choose to do what other people want or expect you to do instead of what *you* truly want, you can’t sustain a high level of enthusiasm. So what do you do? You put off getting a higher education.

Richard Leider, a psychologist, spent decades interviewing senior citizens on what advice they would pass on to the younger generation. Three key points were noted:

- 1) They would be more reflective;
- 2) They would take more risks; and
- 3) They would understand what gave them fulfillment.

The first piece of advice tells you to give more thought, more long-term thought, to your desires and actions. The second tells you to move out of your comfort zone and explore new avenues of interest. And the third piece of advice underlines the first two by telling you to really evaluate what’s important to **YOU**.

Goals fail when they lack conviction. Goals fail when the conviction is not powered by a sincere personal belief. Conviction is driven by a personal conviction, a shape-shifting view or a new mode of thought that says change must happen.

Instead, most goals are powered by pressured beliefs. Such is the case when you feel pressured by external forces to change your habits or your mode of life.

Don’t RENT Your Goals

Many studies have shown that when you own something, you take better care of it. Some good examples would be a house or a car. But when you rent them, on the other hand, you are more careless and unconcerned about them.

“Don’t rent your goals; buy into them!”

Goals are sacred; learn to invest in them. Goals are personal; learn to take care of them. Goals are “you”-driven; not other-driven.

If you’re overweight, the enormous societal pressure to drop pounds is overwhelming. The reason many overweight people fail to lose weight has less to do with the diet itself, but more to do with their personal belief system.

If you asked a person why they wanted to lose weight, you would more than likely get an answer driven by an artificial source: the media or people around them who convinced them that they need to lose weight in order to “fit in” better with society. These are external forces, not internal desires for change that come from deep within that person.

In contrast, the motivating force to lose weight would differ in magnitude if a doctor told someone to lose the weight or run the risk of dying. Now, the reason is personal and internalized; unless you have a death wish, the motivation to lose weight will take hold.

What about making the decision to start your own company? Why do you put it off? Maybe the reason you haven't really pursued that option is because you haven't found a great enough reason to do so. You haven't found the real purpose or reason to change your life.

In other words, you have not internalized the need to do so. Starting a company takes a lot of energy and determination. You can be cajoled by others to start your own business, but that type of motivating force is short-lived, especially when you begin to lose money and have a hard time maintaining a normal family life because of the demands starting a business places on you.

When you let external forces drive your belief system, you are subjugating yourself. You cannot let others sprinkle your belief system with "artificial reasoning." Only a strong personal belief in wanting change can sustain your commitment to making it happen in your own life.

How many times have you had a great idea, followed by a surge of energy, only to have it dissipate over time? Why do you lose your enthusiasm? When you can't maintain a given energy level to keep your dream alive, you really begin to feel like a failure.

When you act or are motivated by pressured beliefs that have been inconspicuously imprinted on you, you undermine your own success. You set yourself up for failure when you rent a goal.

The damage you do to yourself, however, is more debilitating than the obvious failure to accomplish a goal. After each false start on the road to success, you feel worse about yourself than before you started out. You then start to become less confident and more skeptical about setting goals. You reason that every time you set goals, you seem to lose your enthusiasm over time. Then, the worst thing that can happen to you occurs:

You no longer trust your own judgment and ability to accomplish anything.

You set up a cycle of failure that is hard to break. You stop setting goals because you tell yourself, "What's the point? I can never meet them anyway." At this point, the negative programming has kicked into overdrive and you have surrendered who you are and what you have to offer. You become one of the many who tried, failed and gave up, never realizing that the reason you failed in the past was because you acted for the wrong reason(s). You failed because you adopted someone else's version of what you should have done, instead of pursuing what you *wanted* to do.

Again, a prerequisite to goal-setting is to make sure it is your belief system driving it and not someone else's. Make sure it's what *you* want. If you decide to lose weight, make sure it is because *you* want to. If you desire to start a new career, make sure it is because that's what *you* want. If you choose to major in a certain discipline, make sure it is because *you* want a degree in that subject.

I now clearly understand why I resented sitting down and writing out my goals. It seemed meaningless and pedantic at the time. It seemed trivial and unnecessary, but since then I've learned that goals are essential to prevent me from reacting to my environment. Before you act on a goal, you have the luxury, as a creature of thought, to reflect on whether or not that goal represents something you covet for your own personal satisfaction (if not gratification). Your goals represent how you think and reflect what fuels your expectations for long-term success. No one can step into your shoes, assume your life and understand your needs better than you can.

Change begins with awareness—an awareness that goals are the rails that keep your dream-train on track. Don't let outsiders drive your internal engine of desires and dreams! Goals are personal. Goals are “you”-driven. Goals are promises or commitments you make to yourself.

Keep one thing in mind before you begin to write down your goals:
Don't make 'em if you're gonna fake 'em.

L.O.G.I.C. OF SUCCESS

“Unless a capacity for thinking be accompanied by a capacity for action, a superior mind exists in torture.”

– Benedetto Croce

INITIATE

By this point, you should’ve **L**istened to yourself and come to know what it is that you want to do. You should’ve **O**vercome your fear because you have a purpose. Knowing what you want, having overcome your fear and having prepared a **G**oal-setting schedule, you are now ready to move forward. It is time to **I**nitiate the dream! Everything up to this point has been an “internal action” geared toward mentally preparing yourself. Now, it’s time for the next logical step, external action. By that I mean you are now going to go out there and start to make your dream happen. Ready? Of course you are!

“The first casualty of starting your own business or initiating your dream is your ego.”

Tell people what you want! Tell them what you want to do and then tell them again. Sometimes you’re so busy trying to be everything that you wind up being nothing. You try not to commit to anything in particular because it might close off unforeseen opportunities. To the contrary, quite the opposite happens in fact.

By being focused and by telling people what you want, the Law of Attraction kicks in. Let me tell you how the Law of Attraction worked for me.

My first position as Vice President came unexpectedly. If you believe in the Law of Attraction like I did, however, it was really no surprise.

After spending many years in sales (my last position being as a Director of Sales), I decided to change tracks and become a product developer. This decision shocked many people who viewed the change as a step back or a demotion. I didn’t care what others thought (L = Listen to yourself).

You see, I did it because I wanted to learn what it took to go from having an idea to developing a product and then bringing that product to market. As a salesperson, I knew how to sell the product, but I didn't know what it took to create it. So, I accepted a management position developing software products.

I did this for two years until, after having experienced the joys (and misery) of product development, I felt I had learned what I needed to know. I then decided I wanted to go back into sales. I love customer interaction and being in product management didn't allow me to travel as much and get out and meet new people. Truth was, I missed sales.

I remember informing the company President that I would begin looking for a position outside the company. I also informed him that I was committed to finishing the current project and would see the year out.

Now, let me stop this scene for a second so you can understand what I had just done. I had just informed a superior in a \$3B company of my intent to leave. Stupid? Maybe. Did I have another job lined up? No, I didn't have another job lined up, just in case you're wondering.

You see, my personal philosophy is to never blind-side people who've treated me well. I wanted the executive to know what was coming so it wouldn't be a surprise. Could he have fired me right then and there? Yeah, maybe, but I was reassured by one thing: As long as you provide real value to a company and are making things happen for its executives, they aren't willing to let you go that easily.

My superior tried to talk me out of it and asked if there was any other position within the company that would satisfy me enough not to leave. This was a kind gesture and showed how much the company appreciated the value I brought to them. I remember politely saying, "I don't think so; I really want to go back into sales and none of the positions you currently have open seem appealing."

After some more polite conversation, I left the office and not much was said about it afterwards.

Two months later, one of the Vice Presidents of Sales tendered his resignation. Do you want to take a guess who they "tapped" on the shoulder for the job? Yep! You guessed it! Me!

Viola! The law of attraction at work!

You attract those things you desire or want by telling others about them.

But here's the real kicker: One of the overriding factors in the company's decision to grant me that position was the fact that I had been in sales before *and* because I understood the product side of the business. My sales experience helped get me in the door, but

knowing the business from the product side secured the position for me.

By following my instincts in regards to my need to understand the product development side of the business, I positioned myself in front of all the other candidates who applied. Listening to myself paid off...again!

Tell people what you want and you will attract those things that you most desire. Be specific, not general, when describing your goals. Clarity allows others to spread your message. If your explanation of what you want is vague and convoluted, people will walk away uncomprehendingly. As such, they will not be in a position to “spread the word.”

Create a thirty-second commercial about your goals and aspirations.. Be clear about them so if a stranger off the street were to walk up to you and ask, “What are your goals?” you should be able to take one deep breath and, with ease and clarity, tell them in thirty seconds what they are. And in a world where generalities and vague statements are pervasive, a voice of clarity will not only be refreshing but, more importantly, memorable. And that’s what you want: people to remember you.

Going After Opportunities

The most difficult challenge in going after what you want is reaching out for it. Reaching out means getting on the phone in order to make those contacts or going to events in order to network with others. You’re afraid to bother people. You’re afraid of rejection. I know because I’ve been there.

As a sales manager, I’ve “trained” my salesmen not to view calling as an intrusion, but to think of it as doing the customer a favor and helping him or her out. If you have something of value to offer a customer, your focus is on helping them to either become more efficient or to be more productive. If you view calling as sharing information and doing your customer a favor, your psychological phone-call inhibition is somewhat diminished.

When you have a hot lead or some good news to share with a friend, do you hesitate to do so? No. So, if your product or service can help a company, why wouldn’t you be just as excited to share the good news with them? If you believe that you would be a great candidate for a job opening, why shouldn’t you be excited about sharing that with others?

If you don’t feel comfortable selling your product or service because you’re not sure it can help, then you’re either selling the product short because you don’t understand its value or you’re simply selling the wrong product. If you don’t believe in your product, why should anyone else believe in it? If you truly do not believe that

your product, service or even your talent adds something of value, your customers will pick up on that.

The same is true for you as an individual. If you don't believe in yourself, you won't be able to sell others on your capabilities.

“When people tell me they’re afraid of cold calling, I tell them, ‘You either don’t believe you have a value to offer or you don’t understand the value you are offering.’”

I once heard a story about the best harmonica salesman in the world. No one could outsell this salesman and every year he picked up his award at the annual sales meeting.

One day while on a routine sales call, he was asked by a potential client if the harmonic, which played in a particular key, was available in other keys as well. The salesman was taken aback since no one had ever asked him that question. He called back to the home office to check on it, only to find out that his harmonica was designed to play in one key and one key only.

From that point on, the salesman no longer believed his product to be the best on the market. And no sooner than he lost his faith in the product, his selling confidence and along with it his ability to sell were undermined. After that fateful day, he was no longer the number one salesperson in the company.

Now replace the harmonica in this example with what you're selling. It could be a product, a service or maybe even yourself. We are always selling, no matter who we are.

If you're a preacher, you're selling a religious ideology. If you're a customer service representative, you are selling the company's service. We are all part of “the great sales chain.”

But no matter the product or service, you are always having to sell it twice: first to yourself and then to the market. If you can't define the value of it for yourself, how is the customer supposed to do it? If you can't show others how they'll benefit from it, why would they buy?

Even selling a vision requires an understanding and an appreciation of the vision itself.

How many of you are afraid to take action for fear of rejection? How many dreams die on the desktop because you didn't believe in yourself enough to take the necessary action? Oftentimes, you are your own worst enemy. You massacre or drown your ideas and thoughts with your inability to risk rejection.

Many of you have had that sensation or feeling where you had an idea and never acted upon it, only to see it emerge in the

marketplace sometime thereafter. At that point, you say what many other dreamers who didn't follow through say, "Hey, that was my idea!" Then you go around telling your friends about how you had that idea several years ago.

Did you ever notice the look on your friends' faces? Did you ever try to read their expressions? Well, if you look close enough beyond what you want to see, you will notice a look of indifference on their faces. If you could read their minds, they would probably be saying something like, "So, why didn't you act on it?"

And for years to come, you will go on telling that same tired story, about how you had that idea, to people who probably are all thinking the same thing: "Yeah, so why didn't you act on it?"

Fatal Conceit

The marketplace has what I like to call a high absorption factor—an insatiable appetite to absorb new products or ideas. So, forget about what you didn't invent in the past. The real question is what new idea are you going to think up now? Stop looking back at what you could've done and begin thinking in terms of what you can do, right now. Stop believing that you don't have any good ideas left; that notion is simply not true.

The marketplace is constantly changing and new needs are being created every day. The marketplace of ideas is limitless if you understand how to offer value. Whatever it is you think you can offer, there is always enough room out there for you to do so.

Don't adopt a zero-sum mentality that thinks, "If someone's already doing it, there's no room for me." Wrong! In a free market, especially an expansive one, all ideas that add value have room.

- Don't be afraid of competition; embrace it.
- Learn not to be afraid of having an imperfect product or service. You may be amazed at how the market may respond to your idea.
- Learn from those who've perfected their craft and continually improve what you have to offer.
- Never wait for the right time to come out with the right product. The market is too fickle and unpredictable. If you wait too long, by the time you get around to it, the opportunity may have been lost.

It would be nice if we had all the facts before we did anything, but unfortunately, reality and our limited capacity to process complex scenarios aren't so accommodating. You will never have complete information before you embark on a project or idea.

Friedrich Hayek wrote a book called *The Fatal Conceit*, which encapsulated this notion of having to deal with incomplete information. He reminds us that thinking one can predict or foretell how things will work out is to fool oneself or to be full of oneself. He argues that we are incapable of shaping the world based on what we wish it to be.

With regard to taking action, Hayek postulates the following:

“In the marketplace (as in other institutions of our extended order), *unintended consequences* are paramount: a distribution of resources is effected by an impersonal process in which individuals, **action for their own ends** (themselves also often rather vague), literally do not and cannot know what will be the net result of their interaction.” (p.71)

What Hayek is relaying is somewhat anti-Newtonian. Instead of there being an equal and opposite reaction for every action, there is an unpredictable reaction for every action we take. Every action brings forth “unintended consequences” that cannot be taken into account beforehand.

When you read about people who’ve attained great wealth or fame, you will invariably find that their success was not planned. Rather, one action set in motion a sequence of events that led to that person’s favorable outcome.

Read biographies of millionaires, billionaires, scientists, famous artists or what have you, and you will notice a common thread that runs through each one them: They didn’t know they would be so successful.

It should come as no surprise as to why musicians or recording artists can’t repeat past greatness. It should also come as no surprise as to why successful businessmen, who decided to build new companies, could not duplicate the magnitude of their past success.

Most scientific discoveries were not predetermined or planned. There were “mini-discoveries” along the way, which took scientists along new paths of thinking and led to new discoveries.

The “fatal conceit” is to think you can have it all figured out beforehand. Right now, you may have an idea or a desire to go after something, but you seem to be waiting for the perfect time. Stop waiting for “the perfect moment.” There is never a perfect time. And if perchance the perfect time did come along, you wouldn’t know it because unforeseen consequences would be hidden from you!

When you initiate action, you set in motion a sequence of events. Some of those events will play themselves out in the background, without your notice and hopefully to your favor. Some

consequences will manifest themselves gradually over time, ever so subtly.

When I announced I was leaving the company in order to go back into sales, I set in motion a sequence of events. The unseen was happening without my knowledge (e.g., old Vice President leaving his position, executives talking about how to find ways of keeping me, and so on).

When you initiate your “dream sequence,” you will both attract and repel, at the same time, in accordance to your wants and don’t wants. You will attract people who are interested in helping you achieve your dream and you will repel others (and their ideas) that do not contribute to your end goal.

To wait for something good to happen is to be acted upon.

Take Control

On one hand, you profess the need to be able to control your life yet you act as though you want others to take the lead. You talk about how little control you have, but yet you don’t seem to be too anxious to take the reigns of your own destiny.

You can’t wait for someone to say, “Ready, set, go”; life doesn’t work that way. The word “go” was assumed when you were born. The race for happiness and success has begun!

“Again I saw under the sun that the race is not won by the swift, nor the battle by the valiant, nor a livelihood by the worse, nor riches by the shrewd, nor favor by experts; but that time and chance happen to them all.” (Ecc. 9:11)

I appreciate this Biblical verse because it’s a reminder that you don’t have to be the strongest, the fastest, the smartest or the bravest to succeed. Your time and chance will come if you go after your dream and put forth the effort.

Adjusting the Plan

You can’t allow yourself to get discouraged. You’ll notice that as you begin to take those first steps, that not all of your decisions will be right on the money. The key is to learn as quickly as possible from your mistakes. A great speaker by the name of Marshall Sylver often uses the phrase, “Fail forward fast,” meaning get all your mistakes out of the way as soon as possible by going out there and testing your ideas.

If adversity strikes, learn to see the up side of a down situation. Think through how you got yourself into the situation, and then commit to avoiding similar circumstances in the future.

In his book, *The Magic of Thinking Big*, Dr. David Schwartz tells the story of a young man who, in the face of adversity, seemed to have captured the essence of looking beyond the present and projecting himself into the future.

After a training session a few weeks ago, a young man came to see me and asked if he could talk with me for a few minutes. I knew that this young fellow, now about 26, had been a very under-privileged child. On top of this, he had experienced mountains of misfortune in his early adult years. I also knew that he was making a real effort to prepare himself for a solid future.

Over coffee, we quickly worked out his technical problem and our discussion turned to how people who have few physical possessions should look toward the future. His comments provided a straightforward, sound answer.

"I've got less than \$200 in the bank. My job as a rate clerk doesn't pay much and it doesn't carry much responsibility. My car is four years old and my wife and I live in a cramped, second-floor apartment.

"But professor," he continued, "I'm determined not to let what I haven't got stop me."

That was an intriguing statement so I urged him to explain.

"It's this way," he went on, "I've been analyzing people a lot lately and I've noticed this. People who don't have much look at themselves as they are now. That's all they see. They don't see a future; they just see a miserable present.

"My neighbor is a good example. He's continually complaining about having a low-paying job, the plumbing that's always getting fouled up, the lucky breaks somebody else just got, the doctor bills that are piling up. He reminds himself so often that he's poor that now he just assumes that he's always going to be poor. He acts as if he were sentenced to living in that broken-down apartment for the rest of his life."

My friend was really speaking from the heart and after a moment's pause he added, "If I looked at myself strictly as I am—old car, low income, cheap apartment and hamburger diet—I couldn't help but be discouraged. I'd see a nobody and I'd be a nobody for the rest of my life.

"I've made up my mind to look at myself as the person I'm going to be in a few short years. I see myself not as a rate clerk, but as an executive. I don't see a crummy apartment. I see a fine suburban home. And when I look at myself that way, I feel bigger and think bigger. And I've got plenty of personal experiences to prove it's paying off."

Tune in to Success

You have a tendency to see things as they are, not as they could be. Your mental television can't seem to get good reception when it comes to visualizing your future and what you want it to look like.

You grow (or not) based on what you focus on. If you focus on what you don't have, you will get nowhere. Learn to turn your mind into a "what you have" seeker. Take inventory of the little things you have that add up to a lot.

Start with a list of the good relationships you have. Talk to friends who specialize in something you may need help on.

For example, your friend may be good at designing brochures or websites. Learn to leverage this knowledge base by offering them something in exchange for their services that will benefit them. This is called "bartering," an exchanging of services. Maybe your designing friend needs a babysitter, someone to mow the lawn, someone to help with organizing an event and so on.

Many times, these resources are all around us and we fail to notice them. But, something magical begins to happen when you decide to take action; these resources start making themselves visible. As if by magic, resources that you didn't know existed begin to appear.

Yes, the Law of Attraction begins to make you aware of (i.e., attracts you to) those possibilities. Why?

1. You are looking through a pair of eyes that possess purpose and commitment.
2. You are now looking (instead of waiting) for something to happen.
3. You are now acting and setting things in motion that will help you along the road of success.

Don't be surprised when good things begin to happen along the way. You will realize that the opportunities and resources have always been there but they are visible only to those who make a conscious decision to embark on the journey. Doing begets opportunities.

It is a certainty that you will run into obstacles and difficulties. This is to be expected. When adversity strikes, remember not to sell your talents short. Don't concentrate on what didn't work out; concentrate on the positives, the things that have been working out.

You are better than you think you are and you have to keep reminding yourself of the power in concentrating on reaching your goal.

Stop Moaning

Let me share with you a story I once heard about an old man who lived in a small shack off the side of a road. The man would sit in his rocking chair whittling a stick. Alongside his chair lay his faithful companion, a big old hound dog. One day, while rocking in his chair, a stranger came along the road toward the old man's house.

The stranger approached the house, gave the old-timer a kindly hello and asked if he wouldn't mind sparing a glass of water. The old-timer agreed and went inside while the hound dog just lay there motionless. As he waited for the old-timer to return, the hound dog let out a moaning-like yelp but didn't move.

When the old man returned with the water, he struck up a conversation with his visitor. The stranger began to notice that during the course of the conversation with the old man, the old dog would again occasionally let out a long moaning-like hound sound.

The stranger did everything to ignore the old hound and concentrate on the friendly conversation. But the dog's moaning sounds persisted until the stranger could no longer resist the urge to ask, "Excuse me, old-timer, but why is your hound dog moaning? Is he sick?"

"Nah, he ain't sick. He's groaning like that because he's laying down on a nail," replied the old-timer.

"A nail?"

"Yep, a nail."

The stranger looked perplexed and continued, "Well, why doesn't he just get up off it?"

The old-timer paused for second, looked and pointed at the dog with his whittling knife, "You see, stranger, even though the nail hurts him, it doesn't hurt him so much as to make him want to get up off it."

"That's just plain lazy," responded the stranger.

"Yep!" answered the old-timer.

Much like the hound dog, we spend many of our days complaining (moaning) about how bad our job is, about the little money we have or about how our dreams seems to be slipping away, year after year. Like the hound dog, we are lying on top of our own nail of discontent, but we refuse to make the effort to do anything about it. We're unhappy, but not so much so that we want to make the effort to get up and get going.

You have a decision to make: lie down and continue your moaning or get up and do something about. Remember the saying: "It's not what you do with what you don't have, it's what you do with what you do have."

L.O.G.I.C. OF SUCCESS

“Control your world by controlling your thoughts”

– Victor Gonzalez

COGNITIVE CONTROL

The word cognition simply means thinking. To be able to control how you think will greatly determine your attitude towards any project or adversity that you may encounter.

Let's begin with Earl Nightengale's famous declaration: “We become what we think about most.” What do you think about most? Do you think about success more often than you do about failure? Or does the thought of failure dominate your thought process? When adversity strikes, do you think, “Bad things always happen to me!” Or do you believe they'll go away and that the setback is just a temporary one.

As a child, you developed habits of thinking that were reinforced over time. Your choices are the results of your way of thinking. And like many, you are probably held back by a limiting belief system you no longer question because it's habitual.

The purpose or aim of this chapter is to make you aware of how you think or, better yet, think about how you think (meta-cognitive). In order to understand what's been holding you back, it is essential to look at how you think about things. Your attitude, derived from your thinking, will determine whether you will succumb to obstacles or overcome them.

One of the habits you must break was briefly mentioned in the second chapter of this book. The shuttle-box experiment gave us a glimpse at what Seligman called “learned helplessness.” Are you suffering from learned helplessness? Do you have a habitual self-defeatist attitude when you encounter adversity?

Like any addict going through rehabilitation, the first step toward recovery is admitting a problem exists. Do you have an “attitude” problem?

How you think determines how far you'll get in life. If your attitude is always one of pessimism, gloom and doom, you will attract those types of outcomes.

Think of your mind as a giant manufacturing facility. But instead of manufacturing products, your mind manufactures thoughts. What kind of thoughts? Well, that depends on what type of raw materials you use (i.e., what you feed your mind and what you accept as true). Let's talk first about what you feed your mind. If you watch the daily news, you will come to the conclusion that life is bleak and your hope for the betterment of humanity will be diminished with every news story told. Studies have shown that 60-75% of what is shown on the news is negative and further perpetuates the notion of you not being able to do anything about it.

What you read will also determine what you think about on a daily basis. Reading material that does not help you improve or learn will flat-line your growth curve. If the first thing you read in the morning is the newspaper and you extract only the negative stuff from it, don't be surprised if the rest of your day follows suit. The morning is prime programming time for your mind. What do you read when you're not watching television?

As you sit in traffic on your way to work or maybe during your lunch break, are you listening to things that'll improve your attitude and knowledge? Or are you listening to the morning talk show host whose limited, self-deluded conversation always revolves around sex, political scandal or crime?

I should add that the media does try to stick in one or two human interest stories in a futile attempt to rekindle the human spirit. It would be laughable if it weren't so pathetic and disheartening.

Day in and day out, you feed your mind self-debilitating information and then wonder why you have a day-long negative attitude or a dark pessimistic outlook toward the future.

Your belief system (or how you view life) is primarily determined by how you interpret the information you receive. The philosopher, Ayn Rand, once made a statement along these lines:

- Never have a closed mind because you will lose the opportunity to learn new things.
- Never have an open mind because you'll accept almost anything people tell you.
- Always have an active mind, critically taking in information and validating its truth.

What you accept as truth becomes true for "you."

Too often, you take information without analyzing its validity. And too often, in your belief system, this information is propagated as fact without any basis.

Myths are a good example of how propagating old tales, misinterpreted by many, can become a guiding belief system. But closer to home are the myths you carry with you.

Childhood experiences can have a lasting effect on how we think. Kids have a tendency to say mean things out of anger or spite, with no real comprehension of the long-term impact it may have on others. Can you remember back when harsh words were spoken to you? Do you remember feeling hurt and insecure? Do you still carry these “myths”?

Stupid things said to us in the throws of anger remain with us; they often hurt for a long time. If you don’t learn to let go of them, they’ll continue to eat you up inside and prevent you from achieving your potential. “You’re fat! You’re skinny! You’re stupid! You’re bad at this! You’re bad at that!”

Have you conditioned yourself to push those thoughts into the background? Are they still playing a role in your life?

I want you to bring these myths to the forefront and face them head on. You’ll be surprised, with a little willpower and desire, how easily you can dispel those old myths.

When I was young, I was always skinny. I’m talking super skinny. People always poked fun at me and I know it impacted the way I viewed myself. I became more insecure and very self-conscious of my thinness.

Today, I obviously view my thinness as a blessing in disguise. The blessing of being thin became evident at my tenth year high school reunion. To my surprise, there at the dinner reunion were many of my former “peers” who had taunted me in the past. A good majority of them were only a semblance of their former high school selves. Many were overweight and looking like they could use some help pushing back from the table. I was amused.

But that reunion evening, I was struck by something I didn’t expect. Those overweight classmates didn’t see themselves as overweight, or if they did, they didn’t seem to care. They were laughing at themselves when the subject of weight came up; in many cases, they brought up the subject! Their laughter at themselves diffused the very object of ridicule.

I realized at that moment that what I should’ve done back then was laugh at my thinness and accept myself for who I was. Instead, I fed myself a steady diet of negative self-images. Worst of all, I carried this baggage around for a long time.

I now wonder how much more I could’ve done or accomplished in my life if I had not been so hard on myself. Like many things in

life, if I could go back, I'd see and do things much differently. I know better now.

Today, since I refuse to repeat my mental mistakes of yesterday, I am actively guarded about comments people make. In some cases, I analyze them for their validity, and in other instances, I simply laugh them off. I use the term "guarded" because it aptly describes what you should do anytime you hear negative comments.

Try to listen carefully to what people are saying and learn to hear beyond the comments or statements. Learn to hear the words, but more so, listen for the meaning and intent behind those words.

What you feed your mind will determine your attitude toward the world and yourself. The mentality that guides your thinking (meta-cognitive) is what will mold your self-confidence.

This concept became apparent to me when I read the book, *Learned Optimism* by Dr. Martin Seligman. Seligman postulated that beyond talent and ability, there is a third crucial variable to success: optimism.

Seligman was in no way talking about *positive thinking*, whereby you tell yourself how great you are. No. Studies have shown (and you probably know by experience) that positive affirmations have little, if not limited, impact on one's life.

Learned optimism is about analyzing how you think when you experience a setback. It's about what you say to yourself when you encounter adversity that will determine your attitude toward the situation. Seligman calls this the "explanatory style," which is simply how you explain setbacks to yourself.

The way you explain things to yourself determines how strong or helpless you become. By analyzing the thoughts people experienced when they encountered fortune and misfortune, Seligman was able to determine who would most likely succeed in any endeavor.

Most people believe they are optimists when in true fact they are closet pessimists. Seligman developed a test that would measure a person's level of optimism and pessimism.

Take this simple test below. There are two questions and three sets of answers for each one. Circle one response under A, B and C, according to which most appropriately represents your thinking in response to the given statement.

Statement 1: When something good happens to me, I tell myself that:

A

- 1) This kind of thing always happens.
- 2) These things happen sometimes.
- 3) This never happens.

B

- 1) This event happened because of something I've done.
- 2) This happened because of me, but I was lucky. I just happened to be in the right place at the right time.
- 3) This is really due to someone or something else.

C

- 1) This is a great example of the way things always go for me.
 - 2) This event is great, but it's limited to this one specific situation.
 - 3) This event is a quirk; it'll never happen again.
-

Statement 2: When something bad happens to me, I tell myself:**A**

- 1) Wow, how unusual! This never happens.
- 2) This may just be a quirk; this normally doesn't happen.
- 3) Here we go again. This is typical of what always happens.

B

- 1) It's not me. It's them.
- 2) Maybe I could have done better, but so could they.
- 3) I should have done better. It's my fault.

C

- 1) Well, this is only limited to this one situation.
 - 2) This is too bad and could easily happen again.
 - 3) This is awful. It will ruin everything.
-

(source: OEG Insights)

Now add up your circled totals for each statement. For example, if in statement A you circled 1, 3 and 2, your total would be 6. If for statement B you circled 2, 3 and 2 you total would be 7. Your overall total would be 13 (i.e., 6 + 7).

The lower your score (close to 6), the more optimistic you are. The higher your score (close to 18), the more pessimistic you are.

Keep in mind that this test is a fraction of the type of testing needed to evaluate your overall level of optimism or pessimism. It is in no way meant to be scientific.

No matter where your score landed, the good news is that you can always improve your optimism by monitoring what you think, especially when confronted with an adverse situation.

Again, conventional wisdom emphasizes only two aspects of success: talent and desire. But recent studies like this one have shown that *optimism* (how well we explain things to ourselves) is also a prime determinant of how far you will go in life and how likely you will be to achieve your dreams.

For mental exercise, try this: The next time an adverse situation or setback comes your way, stop and think about how you explained the incident to yourself. If you can manage to keep a log and analyze your thinking later, that's all the better.

Learn Your ABCs

Let's say you're driving down the road and a driver abruptly cuts you off: (A). You then say to yourself, "What an idiot! Some people are just too dumb to be behind a wheel." (B). You then proceed to speed up and try to get ahead of the driver, giving him/her a nasty glare as you do so. (C). For the next ten minutes, if not longer, you still fume over the incident. Sound familiar?

The "A" stands for the Adversity you encountered. Whether it's someone cutting you off or failing an exam, every day we encounter adversity. Adversity can be defined as any unfavorable situation or unfortunate outcome that happens to you.

The "B" stands for your Belief about the situation or outcome. This is your thought process that kicks in when you get cut off in traffic or you fail an exam.

The "C" is the Consequence or the actions you take based on what you Believe to be the cause of your Adversity.

In the case of being cut off, you react negatively because you feel you've been wronged. Your attitude is changed, not for the better, and your whole outlook for the next minutes or even hours is affected. From that moment on, you begin to set in motion a chain reaction of attitudes and beliefs that will carry through for the rest of the day, unless you learn how to stop it.

Stephen Covey in his highly acclaimed book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, tells a story about a man who was riding on the subway train with his three kids. His kids were bouncing all over the train, making noise and obviously disturbing all the passengers around them. One annoyed rider became agitated when he saw the father just sitting there listlessly as his children continued to jump over the seats and run around. Finally, not being able to stand it any longer, the rider asked the father why he did not put a stop to the kids' rambunctious attitude. The passenger asked the father if he hadn't given notice to the fact that his kids were creating a disturbance on the train. The man looked up at the annoyed rider and said something along these lines, "I'm sorry, I really am. You see, we just came from the hospital and I don't know how to tell them that their mother has just died."

"You just experienced a paradigm shift."

As you read the story, your mind was much aligned with the annoyed rider (Adversity). You began to mentally criticize the father for not taking disciplinary action to bring his children under control (Belief). And then you applauded the bystander for taking action and letting the father know how inconsiderate he was being (Consequence).

But when the father explained why he was being so passive, how did that affect your thinking? Did your anger or annoyance shift to sympathy once you heard the father's story? Why? What happened to cause you to change your way of viewing the situation?

The first time I read through this story I was just as annoyed mentally as the passenger. But when I heard the father's reasoning, my anger subsided and I felt a surge of sympathy and understanding. I was no longer angry; I was sad to learn of the mother's unfortunate death and what it would mean to the children. In my mind, the children no longer bothered me as they continued to jump around. If I had been on that train, I would have had a higher degree of tolerance and understanding.

If the bystander had known this beforehand, I would venture to say that he would've been more tolerant. Instead, his "ignorance" of the facts led him to draw an inaccurate conclusion about the man.

Now let's go back to our traffic example. What if the person who cut you off was running late for a meeting that could cost him a million dollars? Would you understand? What if that person didn't know he was cutting you off and didn't see you? Would you be more understanding? What if that person had a child in the car who was extremely sick and was being rushed to the hospital? Would you then understand?

I realize that these reasons are more the exception than the rule. Most people who tend to cut you off probably meant to do so. But I would also argue that it probably wasn't anything personal and could likely be attributed to rude driving behavior or to poor social consideration.

The reason you get angry is because that person behaved in a way that you "believe" to be rude. In other words, you get angry when people don't behave the way YOU expect them to. This way of thinking, this expectation-belief system, drives your emotions.

When I lived abroad, I soon realized within a few days of driving that this was not the organized system of driving I was used to in the United States. Driving in foreign countries makes you appreciate how well organized we really are here. My point is this: In those countries, when someone cut me off, it wasn't because they were trying to be rude or were attempting to offend me; it was just their way of driving—no more, no less.

When adversity strikes (A) and your belief system (B) drives you toward your consequence (C), practice interrupting the consequence by questioning why you're thinking that way.

You should always question your belief system. Questioning your beliefs does not weaken them, but instead makes them stronger. The more you put a belief system to the test, the more you begin to understand yourself and what drives your thinking.

The next time an adverse situation occurs and you begin thinking in a certain way, before acting, stop and evaluate your way of "thinking" about the situation. Here are some questions to ask yourself that will interrupt and validate your belief system.

In the case of a car cutting you off, ask: "Are you sure you are not personalizing the issue? Is it really that big of a deal? Could it be he didn't see me?" Your goal here is to let go of an issue that is relatively minor but could affect the rest of your day.

In another case, where you didn't get the promotion you expected, ask yourself: "What could I have done to better position myself for the promotion? Was the candidate chosen better qualified? What did the chosen candidate do that helped him earn the promotion?" Your goal here is to understand "why" and "how" to position yourself for the next opportunity.

Your significant other decides to end the relationship. Ask yourself: "Did I do my best to maintain an open and honest relationship? Was it really working out? Could this be for the better?" Your goal here is to evaluate your contributions and commitment and then move on.

When your friends tell you you'll never amount to anything, ask yourself: "Do they really know me? Do they understand my dreams and my potential? Are they any better off than I am? Are they even in a position to judge me?" Your goal is to "consider the source" spewing the negativity. Remember, successful people don't spew negativity; only people who are failing at their own lives do.

You are, as many would say, the sum total of all your thoughts up to this point. Visualize a blackboard as tall in feet as your age. Imagine that every negative thought you've ever had in your life is on that board with a subtraction sign in front of it. On the opposite side of the fence, for every positive thought you've ever had, there's a plus sign before it. If you add up all of those plus and minus

thoughts, the result would be who you are in terms of your thinking. You are the sum total of all your thoughts up to this moment. Would your total be positive or negative?

All the people around you who have negative totals will do what they can to keep adding negatives to your math. Your job is to seek out “adders,” people who are trying to do something positive with their lives.

Friends oftentimes mean well but they will reinforce your belief system (B) in a negative way. Indirectly or directly, they remind you that there’s not much you can do about changing your condition or who you are as a person. They will preach failure is inevitable and that success is the private dominion of the fortunate few.

Now, friends never come right out and say you will fail; that would be too obvious. Dream killers disguise their intent. I’ll give you a simple example. Let’s suppose you decided to pursue your dream of being a fashion clothes designer, and you tell your friends about this newfound enthusiasm. Here are some of the things a dream killer would most likely say:

- 1) “Really?” (with an added look of disbelief)
- 2) “Wow, that sounds interesting.” (with an absence of encouragement before they proceed to change the subject)
- 3) “That business is too competitive; I would never make that choice.”
- 4) “You don’t even have the money to get started!”
- 5) “Many people ‘I know’ have failed in that business.”
- 6) “You sure are brave!”

Sound familiar? I could go on but you get the point. When you hear these types of statements and reactions, you now know where the person making them stands. These responses are a dream killer’s way of saying, “No way! It’ll never work!”

In the past, you might have heard these statements and perhaps didn’t give them much thought.

Your mind, however, is not only able to pick up the words spoken, but also to detect the gestures, expressions, intonation in the voice and so on. All these indiscriminant cues go to work on your subconscious, causing you to question your intentions about following your dream. Beware the dream killer’s language!

Dream killers never tell you what they really think; they just, consciously or unconsciously, infect your belief system (B). By

doing this, they hope you won't take any action (C) on following your dream.

Friends can play a major role in supporting you if they are like-minded individuals who want to get ahead by following their own dreams.

In success, positives attract.

But unfortunately, there are those friends who deep down inside don't want you to succeed. Why? Because when you succeed, you'll become a painful reminder of their inadequacy. Your friends can no longer blame their own inability to succeed on the "system" or give some other lame excuse. They can no longer use excuses, especially when they see that you are making the dream happen.

There's a funny story about a Canadian bird who decided that he didn't want to bother to fly south for the winter. Instead, he figured he could ride out the winter while thinking to himself, "How cold can it really get?"

So, while all the other birds decided to head south, he just hung around waiting for winter to set in. By the time December kicked in, he began to question his ability to stave off the cold and he started to doubt his chances of survival. He tried finding food, but the snow made it difficult.

Hungry and cold, the bird finally decided to fly south before it became too late. So off he started, but this time having to make the trip alone. The weather wasn't kind; as he flew, it began to rain. The rain, given the cold weather, began to freeze on his wings. The bird soon realized he was unable to fly and began his spiraling descent. He glided downward until finally crash landing in a field, where he figured he would eventually die.

A few moments after hitting the ground and lying there half-dazed, a very robust cow stepped over him and dropped a plop right on top of him. The stunned bird couldn't believe it. "How could this be? Isn't it bad enough that I'm about to die? The last thing I want to breathe in on my last gasp of air is cow dung!"

As he lay there frozen and disgusted, readying himself for death, something amazing began to happen. The dung was warming him up. He could feel his wings beginning to thaw. He began to slowly move his wings as his blood began to flow again.

Overjoyed at his renewed hope of living, he began to sing like he'd never sung before.

At that very moment, the farmer's cat heard the sound while lying in the barn nearby. The cat couldn't believe what he was hearing. "There shouldn't be any birds around here this time of the year," the cat thought to himself. So he went out to investigate and to his disbelief found a bird lying in the pasture, singing away. The cat

then went over to where the bird lay, pulled it from the pile of dung, wiped the dung off the bird and then ate it. Yep, ate him!

Like any good story, there's always a moral, and in this case there are a few. The first: Not everyone who plops on you is your enemy. The second: Not everyone who cleans plop off of you is your friend. And lastly: When something good happens to you, just shut up, be happy and continue on your journey.

Don't let others kill your dreams. Don't let others infect your mind with negative thoughts about not being able to achieve your dreams. Find a supportive person or network of people who can help you and who can contribute to your journey.

ABC, Now D

So how do you fend off negative comments or feelings? If your peers give the types of responses I listed above when you present them with an idea, I want you to first listen carefully. I want you to be aware of the statements they are making and realize how they may be loaded with negativity. Being aware of them is the first step. The second step is to practice what I'll term "disqualify" (D) the negativity. Let's take the above example, where you presented your idea to your friends and received lukewarm responses. The first series of questions you should ask is:

- 1) "Am I telling the right people about what I am going to do?"
- 2) "Can these friends, aside from moral support, help me reach my goal?"
- 3) "Are they in a position to judge the validity of my idea?"

If at least two out of three of your answers were "no," then telling those friends your idea was a waste of time! Telling them probably made you feel better by allowing you to express your desires but beyond that, what did you get in return? Not much!

So, why would you seek the advice and/or approval of people who are not in a position to help you accomplish your goals?

The answer to this question may vary from person to person, but they would all have their roots in seeking validation for your idea.

You want people to nod approvingly at what you want to do.

But let me ask you, if a surgeon wanted to perform a unique method of heart transplantation, would he ask a plumber or carpenter for advice? Would he ask his blue-collar pals with whom he plays basketball on the weekend? Would he ask anyone without verifying their credentials? Of course not!

Then WHY do you share your goals and aspirations with those who are in no position to judge how good or bad your idea is? Why not

share them with qualified people who can offer constructive advice on what steps to take?

If you can't determine whether a person is a good advice giver or not, then learn how to disqualify (D) negative comments by reminding yourself that others are in no position to judge your ideas better than you can. Find mentors who have credentials, who have done something with their lives and have pursued a dream. Seek out people who are doing what you want to do.

If your idea is so unique, seek out people who are doing something similar and learn from them. Take their comments and judge for yourself if they can help you or not.

Another aspect of the disqualification process is designed to refute your own negativity. When you encounter adversity (A), your belief system (B) begins to judge, and consequently (C) something "negative" occurs. When this happens, I want you to stop and disqualify the event as an aberration.

For example, you study for an exam, take the test and fail (A). Your first thoughts are probably, "How could this be? I'm such an idiot!" (B). You then decide you want to drop the course or refuse to give the class another try (C).

I want you to stop yourself at this moment and begin the disqualification (D) process. First, disqualify the adversity (A) by reminding yourself that you've failed exams before and have lived to pass the course (i.e., failing exams is not lethal).

Next, I want you to re-evaluate your belief system (B). For all you know, others may have found the exam just as difficult. Remind yourself of past exams where you've failed but managed to come back and secure a good grade. You've proven in the past you're not an "idiot" or how else would you have gotten this far?

Finally, get over the notion of giving up by explaining to yourself that quitting isn't the answer (i.e., not following through on C). Do so by asking yourself questions about how you can better prepare for the next exam. What are some of the things you could do differently to improve your chances of a better grade next time?

You start disqualifying (D) your notions about failing (A) and your self-deprecating beliefs about your intelligence (B), and you begin to decide that you can overcome this adversity without the consequence (C) of quitting.

If you take the mental time to "disqualify" your previous thought pattern, you will immediately notice that your attitude toward the exam and the class begins to change.

One final note, the (D) stands for disqualify, not delude. Do not delude yourself by telling yourself things that aren't or weren't true. Remind yourself of past successes to give you the confidence to take on this new challenge; do not invent past successes.

When you decide to take the necessary steps to change the consequences (C), don't just say it; do it! If you commit to making

changes in order to get better grades, you can do it. But, if you make these promises to yourself with no intention of following through, then you are “deluding” yourself and failure will once again ensue.

By challenging your cognitive (thinking) process, you are better able to understand how you feel towards certain things. If your ABC is always negative, you will feel awful about what it is you’ve done. You will become more withdrawn and fearful because every adversity (A) brings with it a negative consequence (C).

By first disqualifying the uniqueness of your adversity (i.e., admitting you’ve had similar challenges in the past), you begin to build a little confidence in your ability to overcome. By then disqualifying your negative belief system (i.e., You can do it; you have the ability.), you begin to think about strategies that have worked for you in the past. Finally, by disqualifying the intended consequence (C) of your actions (i.e., refusing to give up and finding a way), you begin to implement a plan for success.

In summary, your cognitive process should be as follows.

Adversity Strikes: “I’ve had similar challenges in the past.”

Belief System: “I can do it! I have the ability!”

Consequence: “I refuse to give up; let’s try a new approach.”

Your thoughts are directly linked to how you feel about yourself and towards a situation. If you feel in control and confident, then things will go better for you, but the opposite also holds true. By taking control of your cognitive process, you begin to take hold of your emotional state.

This differs from “positive thinking” in the sense that you ARE NOT supposed to repeat positive platitudes (“I’m great!”) or wishful statements (“I’m going to be a millionaire.”). Again, studies have shown that this approach is ineffective for two obvious reasons: 1) saying and doing are two different things; and 2) you can’t lie to yourself.

What you can do is convince yourself that you have the ability to overcome adversity by collecting evidence from your past. Learn to “explain” to yourself, in a positive way, that success is not handed over easily. When things go wrong, explain to yourself how you could’ve made them go better.

You can collect additional evidence from others who’ve had similar struggles then went on to implement plans in order to manifest a positive outcome (i.e., success).

Learn to mimic successful people; do what they do. There’s enough documented evidence out there on how others have achieved greatness in the field you are interested in. Seek them out.

Lousy Job Redefined

One of the most common objections I get to this argument about explaining things to yourself is: “What happens when you have a job you don’t like?” In the beginning, I mentioned the idea of assigning yourself a purpose, something that will drive your desires and attention to reach your goal. Why couldn’t this apply to your job? Why not assign your job a purpose? Take it one step further. Why not assign your job a purpose that will help you achieve your long-term goal? Let’s step back for a moment and examine a hypothetical case that will illustrate what I’m trying to get across.

Anna has a job that she doesn’t really like. She’s a secretary for a boss who doesn’t value her knowledge and can’t recognize her hidden potential. It’s no wonder Anna is frustrated and discontent with her position. She stays in the position only because she has bills to pay and she’s not independently wealthy.

Anna’s real passion is to open up her own small business specializing in marketing and promotion. Anna has the technical knowledge and believes her creative abilities will be better utilized in that type of environment.

So, what should Anna do? She hates her job, but she doesn’t have the capital or money to start her own business. Every day that goes by, Anna feels as though she is wasting her time and her dream is slowly becoming just that, an elusive dream.

When Anna gets home from work, she is usually both physically and mentally exhausted. That’s not surprising because, as you know, when you’re doing something that doesn’t excite you, it takes that much more energy to get the job done and maintain a certain level of enthusiasm.

So, when Anna gets home, she just wants to plop down in front of the TV with a nice glass of wine to dull her senses and forget about the day. This scene is repeated over and over again, year after year, and Anna begins to realize she will never achieve her dream.

Now let’s assume Anna runs into me and I tell her the following: “Anna, I know you can’t get excited about your job because it’s routine and mundane. I also know that you hate being a secretary, so trying to impress your boss is not in your best interest. And, I know you are frustrated because you keep deferring your dream; you’re constantly making up excuses why you can’t get going. I understand because I’ve been there.

“But Anna, what if we redefined the way you’re looking at your situation? What if I told you that in order to enjoy your job, you need to redefine for yourself why you’re doing what you’re doing? In other words, you need to give yourself a good explanation of how doing your job as a secretary will help you reach your goal.”

I can imagine that at this point Anna is confused. I would continue explaining along these lines:

“Anna, you want to open your own marketing and promotions business but you don’t have the money. What if you explained to yourself that the reason you go to work is to make money so you can begin investing in your future business?”

“I want you, Anna, to make a list of the things you would need to start your business. I want you to list everything from business cards to stationary, all the way to fax machine and pencil sharpener.

“Now, every time you get your paycheck, I want you to ‘invest’ in your dream by buying slowly, over time, the items you will need to start your business. So, instead of going home and watching TV, you go out shopping for your items and start slowly building your business at home.”

How would Anna begin to feel now when she got home?

By first planning out what she needs to get her business going, she is able to explain to herself that going to work is really about investing in her future company. Thinking this way gives her current job meaning and purpose (e.g., to fulfill her dream).

Frustration sets in when you don’t feel like you’re growing, when you feel stagnant and motionless in your desired direction. But by redefining her job and taking action in building her business, Anna’s dissatisfaction is minimized, reduced and offset by the excitement of putting her business together.

Re-explaining to yourself why you go to work can help you if you can find a way to tie it into building or growing your dream situation.

Recall that meaning is something within your control that you can assign to any activity you find satisfying. The choice is yours: to assign or not assign meaning. It’s your choice to find purpose in the mundane or be deadened by it over time.

There is a story often told about how you kill a frog. They say if you drop a frog in a beaker of boiling water, the frog will quickly realize its predicament and jump out. But, if you put the frog in a beaker of lukewarm water the frog won’t leap out. What you then do is turn up the heat slowly and indiscernibly so that eventually the frog just submits and dies from the heat.

When you accept your lot in life as final, much like the frog, over time you will die internally. Ambition and goals become annoyances when you sense that there is nothing you can do about them.

Learn to leap out of the beaker of boredom and find your way toward something you want to do, toward something that drives your desires. If you don’t, over time life will claim you just like it did the frog.

L.O.G.I.C. OF SUCCESS

“Rip up those tired old rags and get yourself some new success threads!”

– Victor Gonzalez

5 PIECES TO A DREAM

I want you to take a normal sheet of paper and in the center of that paper, I want you to write down your dream. What is your dream? Don't know where to start? How about this? If money weren't an issue, what would you do? Where would you live? Close your eyes and give this some serious thought. Think of something you would love to be involved in that would make your life just that much more wonderful.

Write it down now.

Now, let's talk about what it will take to make your dream come true. Let's take your dream from just words on a piece of paper to making it happen.

On the other side of the page, I want you to draw four lines, each equally spaced, from the top of the page to the bottom of the page, creating five columns. In each column, I then want you to write down obstacles or reasons you believe will prevent you from achieving your dream.

Write them down now.

At this point, I'd like to share a story with you about a girl named Jill. Jill came up to me one day and we began to talk about dreams and how to achieve them. The conversation took many twists and turns but I noticed she always came back with a reason why it would be difficult for her to achieve her goals. She never came out and said what was holding her back; she simply implied it throughout the conversation. I was a little disheartened because I thought she was selling herself short.

So I asked Jill to do what I just asked you to do. I said, “Jill, take this sheet of paper and I want you to envision your dream. What would your ideal situation be? Write your dreams on the sheet of paper.” She did as I instructed.

I then asked her to flip the page over and draw four lines, forming five equal columns. In each column, I asked her to write down five obstacles or reasons that would prevent her from achieving her dream.

Next, I asked Jill to hand me the sheet of paper so I could look at what she’d written. The sheet of paper looked like this:

People don’t like me; I’m not perfect.	I had a rough childhood.	I have a handicap.	Fear of Failure	I’m not smart. It takes me longer to learn things.
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I said, “Jill, let’s go through each one of these and discuss them individually.” She agreed. We started from right to left.

I began to tell her about how she was being hard on herself for thinking she wasn’t smart, which she obviously was.

She responded by telling me it takes her longer to understand concepts and work through problems than others. This is the primary reason why her grades were suffering.

I then asked Jill a key question. “Jill, if I were building you a house and you had these two options, which would you choose: You can have your house built quickly and cheaply, or slowly and of high quality?”

She hesitated and then responded, “Slow and of high quality.”

I jokingly told her she must’ve read the story of three little pigs and she smiled.

“Jill, my point is this. If it takes you more time to study, or should I say build, isn’t being able to live your dream worth the extra time it will take?”

I then added, “You can take the easy way out and quit but you’ll end up never following your dream. In other words, you can quit quickly and live a cheap life. Or, you can take your time, going at *your* pace, and slowly reach your dream. Remember, you’re not in a race with anyone but yourself. If it takes you longer, it doesn’t matter. Wouldn’t you agree that it doesn’t matter how long it takes, as long as you get there?”

She nodded in agreement.

“So, would it be fair to say that this obstacle is something you can overcome by just giving yourself more time and by not pressuring or rushing yourself?”

She replied, “Yes, you’re right.”

Holding the sheet of paper in my left hand, I ripped that particular column off with my right hand. We now had the following list left on the sheet.

People don't like me; I'm not perfect.	I had a rough childhood.	I have a handicap.	Fear of Failure
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I said, "Let's take the second one, Fear of Failure."

I went on to explain to Jill that failure is essential to success. Only by learning from our mistakes can we move forward. Every failure is a learning opportunity. Studies have shown that successful people were once failures who continued trying, learning from every one of their failures. The only people in this world who don't fail are those who don't try.

I told her about the "O" in the Logic of Success about overcoming our fears. I told her sixty percent of what we worry about never comes to pass and twenty percent is in the past so it can't hurt us. I went on to tell her that another ten percent, even if it were to come true, would have a minimal impact on our lives. Finally, I explained that of the remaining ten percent, maybe four or five percent would actually impact us, but it would not kill us.

I reminded her that fear leads to paralysis. Paralysis, in turn, leads to inaction. Inaction leads to low self-esteem and low self-esteem leads you right back to fear.

I then told her about Thomas Edison. "Edison failed 10,000 times before he made the impregnated carbon filament which is used in a light bulb. After the 5,000th failure, a reporter asked him if he was discouraged. In response, he reminded the reporter that he had not failed 5,000 times, but that he had succeeded in determining 5,000 ways it would not work, which meant he was 5,000 steps closer to discovering how to make it work.

"Jill," I further explained, "I should note that the greatest scientific minds of that time were writing in scientific journals how Edison was wasting his time. Yet, Edison ignored all the criticism. Edison knew about the "L" in the Logic of Success: Listen to yourself, not others."

I kept going, "Jill, understanding that failure is part of the universal learning process and that no one ever succeeds without failing, would you now agree that failure is not something you should fear, but rather it is part of becoming successful?"

She nodded approvingly. So, I tore off that column from the sheet of paper.

People don't like me; I'm not perfect.	I had a rough childhood.	I have a handicap.
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I then asked Jill to explain what she meant by having a handicap. She replied, "Well, in this male-dominated world, it's hard for women to succeed. I see my gender as a handicap in trying to make it in business."

I was surprised by this view, given the progress women have made in the business world in the past few decades. "Jill, you realize that one of the fastest growing business segments is the women's market. Also, if you look at many of the Fortune 500 companies, you will undoubtedly find a woman running the business or contributing strongly to the company's success. Even in the highest offices of government, women are making progress every day with uncompromising success."

We went on to discuss several examples for the next thirty minutes or so.

"Jill, do you agree now that this is a self-limiting belief and not a real obstacle?" I asked at the conclusion.

"Yes," she agreed.

I ripped that column from our sheet of paper and continued.

People don't like me; I'm not perfect.	I had a rough childhood.
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I didn't know what Jill meant by a rough childhood so I asked. Jill went on to explain how she didn't have much where she grew up and how kids who came from better homes were far more likely to succeed. Jill's concern here was the ability to catch up to kids who had gone to private schools and who seemed to be doing better in college than she was.

"Jill, make it a goal to search out other women, or men for that matter, who overcame similar adversities and went on to success. When you see other people like yourself who've done it, only then will you start believing you can do it too. Look for heroes and heroines who've broken past the abusive barriers to become successful.

"I remember learning about Oprah Winfrey, who was sexually molested from the time she was twelve years of age until she was seventeen. Today, Oprah is one of the most powerful women in the United States, not to mention that she's financially successful as well. She was able to overcome not only a sexual abuse, but also economic adversity as well.

“Jill, in life, we cannot move forward if we do not let go of the past,” I concluded.

Jill again nodded approvingly.

“Can I tear this column?” I asked.

“Yeah,” she agreed.

People don't like me; I'm not perfect.
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“Jill, what do you mean by ‘people don’t like you’? You seem friendly enough,” I observed.

“Yeah, but I can tell people around me don’t like me,” she responded

“How do you know?”

“I know. And if you knew me better, you’d know I’m not perfect,” she explained.

“So, who is? Jill, if you really look around, you’ll realize that no one is perfect. The name of the game in life is to aim for success, not perfection. We all, I mean every one of us, have our imperfections. Some of us are too tall, some are too short, some are too fat, some are too skinny, some have big feet, some have ugly feet and so on. And not all imperfections are physical; some you can’t see. The perfect human has yet to be born. To measure yourself against perfection is to measure yourself against something that doesn’t exist.

“Wouldn’t you agree that you’re being both hard on yourself and unrealistic?” I asked.

“Yes,” she once again agreed.

I told her the story of my tenth reunion, where I was in real good shape and my peers seemed to have developed a weight problem...but didn’t seem to care. I added how they had learned to laugh at their imperfections and move on.

“So, would you say imperfection has nothing to do with success, that success is a matter of simply accepting yourself for who you are with all your wonderful imperfections?”

She laughed, “Yeah, yeah, OK.”

“Now, Jill,” I continued, “I’m holding in my hands the five strips of paper, each one with a reason you thought would stop you from achieving your dream. Would you now agree with me that these reasons are self-imposed obstacles?”

“Yeah,” she affirmed.

So I ripped the strips in half as a way of confirming what she had just said.

Holding the torn strips in my hand, I asked, “Are you feeling better?”

“Yeah, I am. I feel more confident about myself,” she answered.

“Good. One last thing, Jill, these strips of paper represented your belief system. And when you buy into a self-limiting belief system, this is what happens to your dreams...”

I then tossed the papers in the air and they came down like confetti all around her.

I could tell by Jill’s facial reaction that she had gotten the message. As she looked at the pieces of paper, now pooled all around her feet, she looked at me, nodding her head approvingly, and said, “I got it.”

Don’t allow your negative belief system to shred your dreams. Reach for success. Listen to yourself. Overcome your fear. Set Goals. Take the Initiative and Control your Cognitive thinking. Do these things, and you will be well on your way to fulfilling your vision of who you want to be.

And when someone says, “You sure are lucky. Good things seem to always happen to you,” I want you to respond, “No, not really, I just understand the Logic of Success.”